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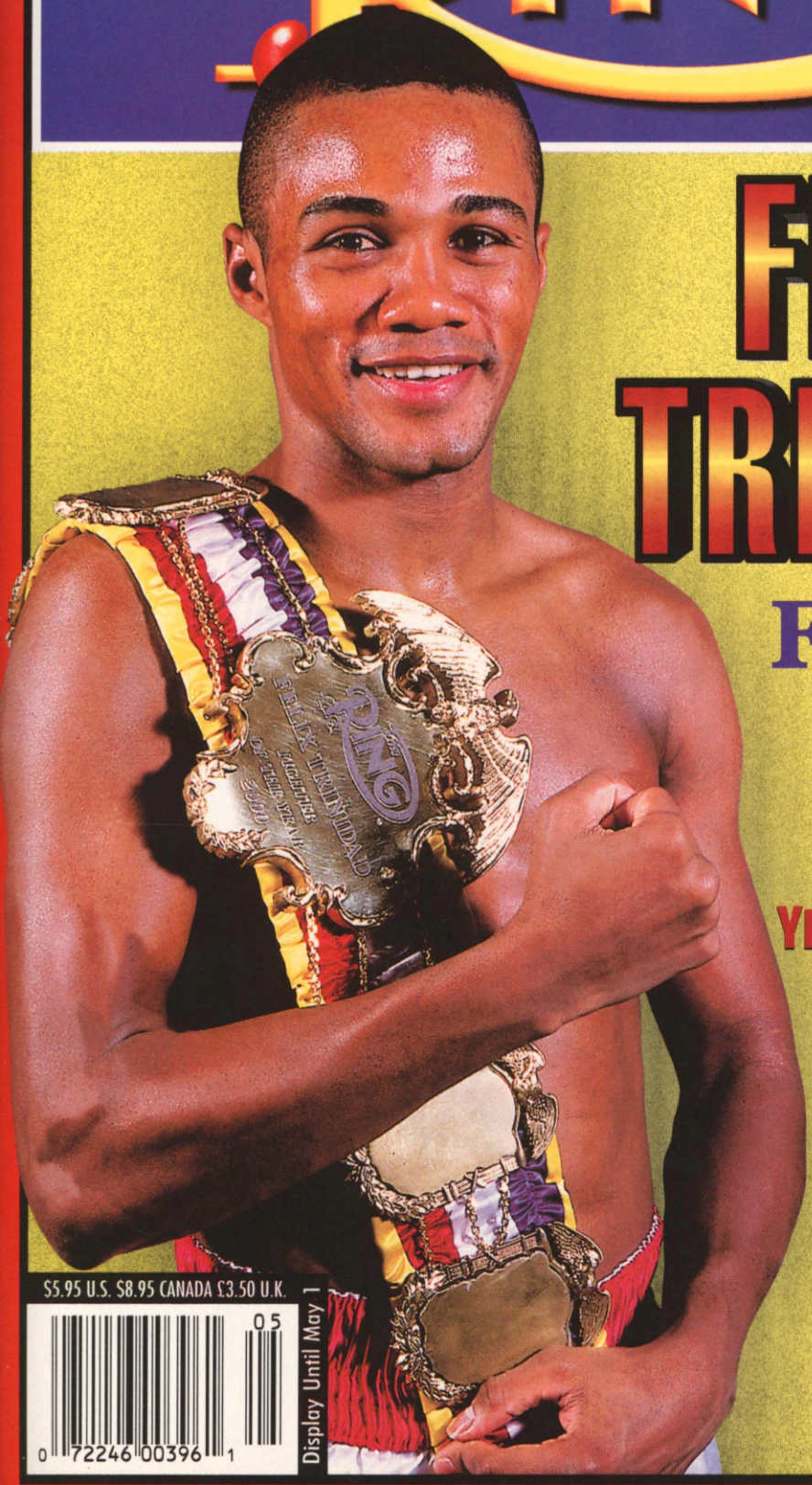

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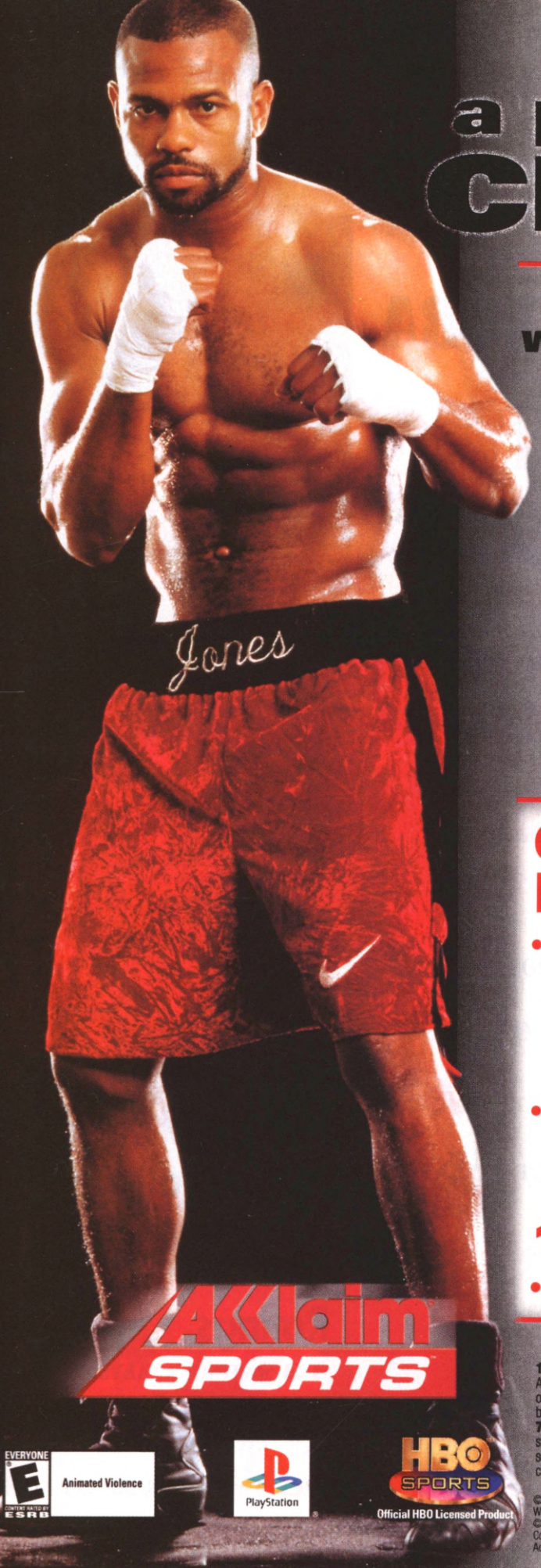

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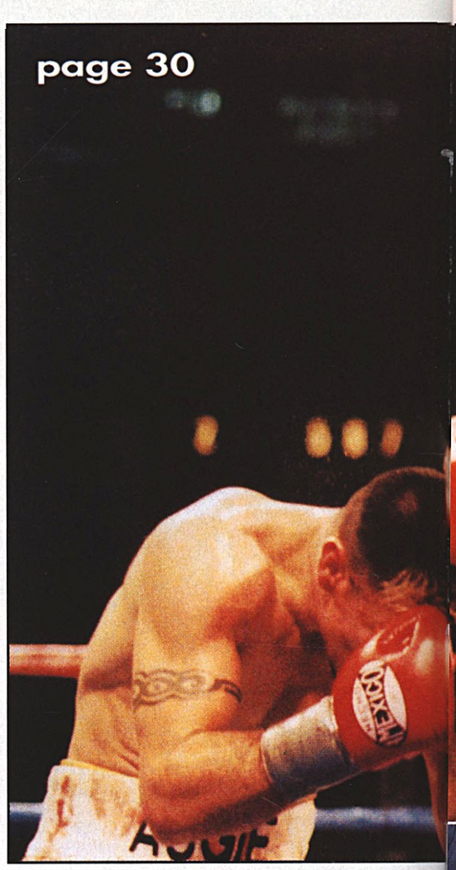

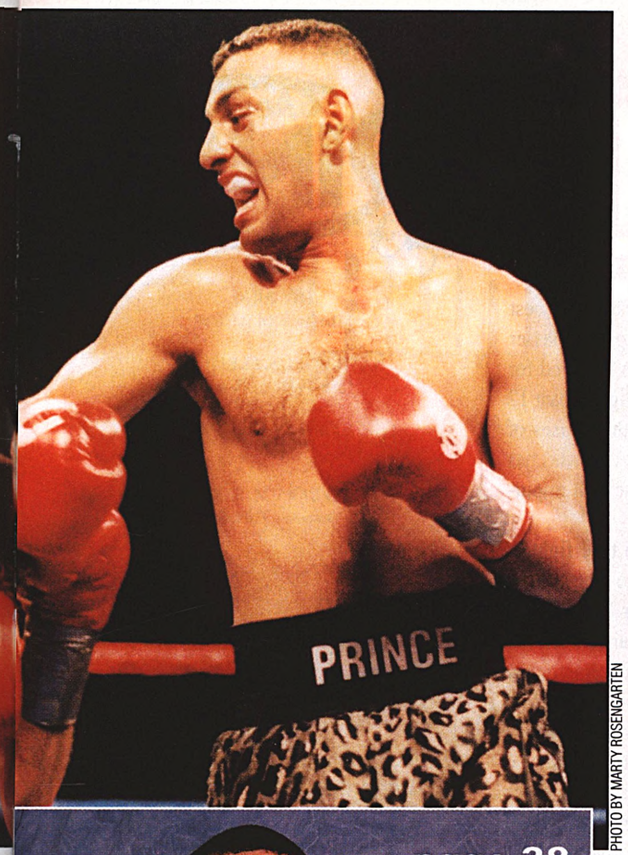

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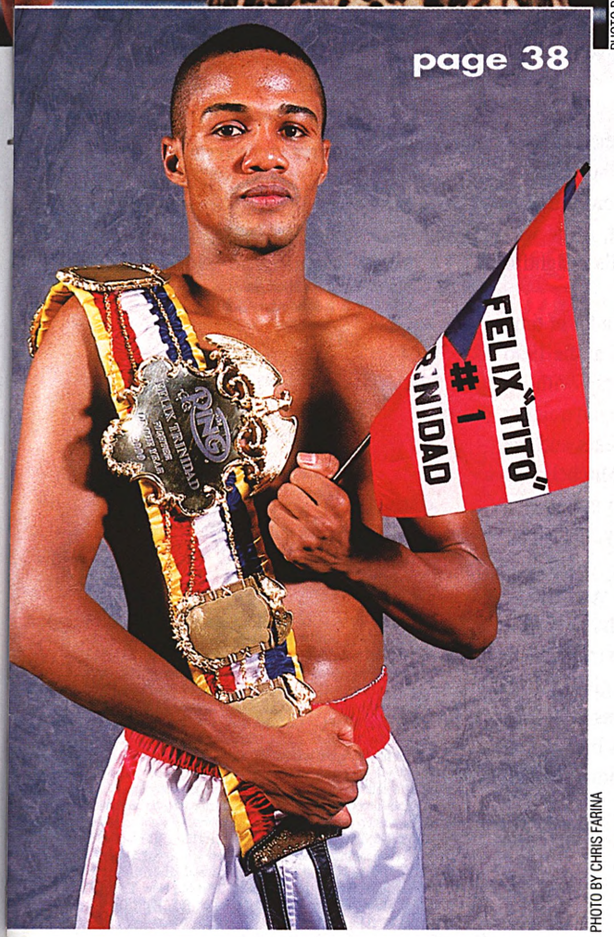

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

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RINGSIDE

A large portion of this issue is dedicated to celebrating the best of boxing in the year 2000. And while some of the game's lesser lights are given brief mention, most of the space is reserved for the very finest the Sweet Science had to offer during the past 12 months. But I'd like to take a few lines to sing the praises of every man and woman, regardless of their skill level, who has the courage to duck between the ropes and give their all in pursuit of glory.

It's easy for fans and media members alike to take fighters for granted. And who among us hasn't, at one time or another, referred to a boxer as a bum, a stiff, or a palooka? But as I write this in late-December, former IBF featherweight champion Paul Ingle is still fighting for his life after suffering brain damage in his bout with Mbulelo Botile. As tragic as that fact is, it is also a powerful reminder of how much fighters risk every time they lace on the gloves and go into combat.

Boxing is an easy target for criticism, especially for those who can't (or won't) look beyond the toll it takes on its participants. But it is the inherent danger of boxing that makes it both so special and so misunderstood. Therefore, I urge each and every reader of this page to clap a little harder and cheer a little louder the next time you attend a fight card, and also say a silent prayer of thanks for those who give and take the blows. To one degree or another, they're all heroes.

***

This issue features the 12th part of THE RING's ongoing series about the career of David Reid, "Career Crisis" *(page 68)*. Until now, I've written the series, but as I was unable to attend Reid's comeback fight with Kirino Garcia, it made more sense to have regular contributor Bernard Fernandez write the latest installment, as he was ringside for the bout. Even so, I wanted to add my thoughts to Bernard's insightful piece.

Due to the nature of the series, I've had the pleasure of spending quite a lot of time with David and his team since he won America's only boxing gold medal at the 1996 Olympics. At the heart of the story has always been Reid's relationship with Al Mitchell, the man who became David's surrogate father shortly after he began training him. They were together through Reid's sometimes troubled teenage years and the Atlanta Games, where Mitchell was the U.S. boxing team's head coach. Mitchell also helped Reid negotiate a lucrative professional contract and continued to act as lead trainer and adviser through the 16 pro fights he's had to date. Now, sadly, their relationship appears to be falling apart.

I've gotten to know both Al and David pretty well over the past few years, and I like them both very much. They have been good for one another, and each has helped the other reach goals that probably neither of them would have obtained on their own. Journalistic ethics and common sense prevent me from taking sides or giving them advice about their professional problems. But regardless of what happens from this point on, they should never forget that what they've meant to each other is bigger than boxing, more important than championship belts, and, if nourished with love and respect, will last longer than any purse that can be earned inside the ring.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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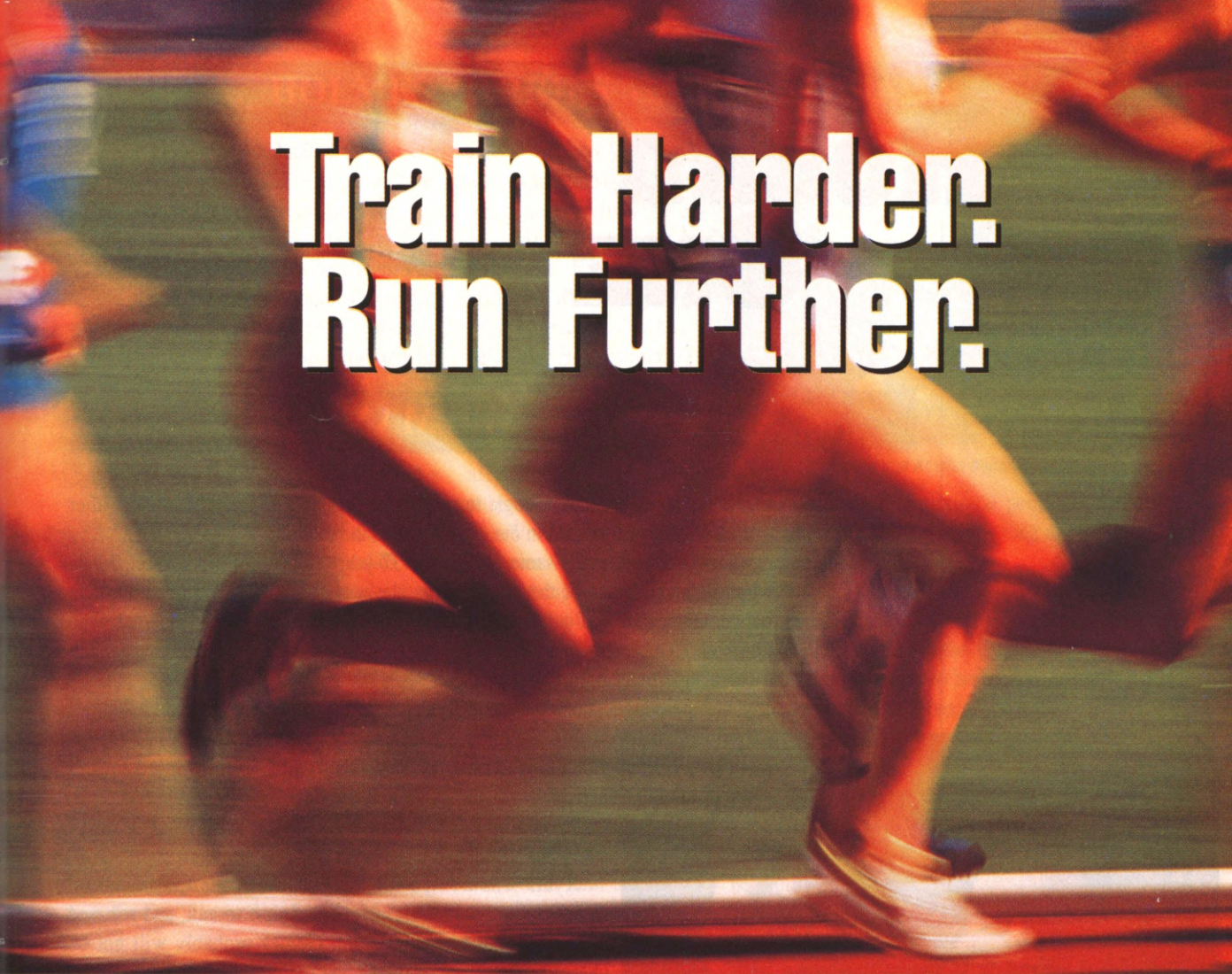

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ROUND ONE

A CHANGED MAN?

The comeback of Tony Ayala Jr. took a tragic turn when he was shot in the left shoulder after entering the home of an 18-year-old woman in the early hours of the morning of December 12.

Nancy Gomez, who worked out at the same gym as the 37-year-old boxer, awoke to see Ayala standing near her in a darkened room of the house where she was staying. According to the San Antonio, Texas, police, Gomez slipped quietly out of the room and alerted Sandra Gutierrez, who was asleep in another room. Gutierrez got a .45 caliber semiautomatic, and together, the two women confronted Ayala. Then Gutierrez handed Gomez the gun while she got dressed.

"I can't believe you're pointing a gun at me," said Ayala, according to the police report.

"I can't believe you're in my house. I'll shoot you," replied Gomez, who then fired one shot when Ayala stepped toward her.

"He put his hand in front to get the gun away from me, and I shot him," Gomez told police.

Ayala was treated for his gunshot wound, arrested on charges of burglary with intent to commit assault, and released after posting a $100,000 bond. Gomez probably will not be charged.

"We feel she was right and justified in what see did," said Deputy Chief Richard Gleinser.

The episode is eerily similar to the one in 1983 when Ayala was convicted of aggravated sexual assault after breaking into the apartment of a 30-year-old woman in West Paterson, New Jersey, and raping her at knife-point. Ayala, who was the number-one junior middleweight contender at the time of his conviction, served 16 years before being released in 1999.

Ayala, 27-1 (24), resumed his boxing career in August '99 with a third-round TKO of Manuel Esparza, but after four more wins over minor opposition, he was stopped by former IBF junior middleweight champion Yory Boy Campas on July 28. Ayala suffered a broken hand in the Campas bout, but was back in training at the time of the shooting.

PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

Ayala and Raditz (right) both claimed "El Torito" was rehabilitated

Although Ayala claimed to have rehabilitated himself while incarcerated, according to reports in the *San Antonio Express-News*, signs of pending trouble surfaced recently when the boxer was sighted at local strip clubs, sometimes in the company of Dr. Brian Raditz, Ayala's prison psychiatrist-turned-boxing-manager. Ayala also told local TV interviewers that he felt depressed.

"I may have pushed the envelope there a couple of times while I was on vacation," said Ayala a week before being shot. "How I dealt with that depression is that I over-indulged a couple of times more than I should have."

This admission was especially disturbing in light of the fact that Ayala had been using alcohol and heroin when he committed the crime in New Jersey that originally sent him to prison. If convicted on the latest charges against him, Ayala could face up to 99 years in jail.

—Nigel Collins

HOLMES CARRIES MARCIANO'S AWARD

On December 10, 2000, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in White Plains, New York, the American Association for the Improvement of Boxing held its 20th annual Boxerama awards luncheon. Past and present champions honored were Zab Judah, Carmen Basilio, Joey Giardello, and, surprisingly to those familiar with the history of the AAIB, Larry Holmes.

The AAIB was started in 1969 by Stephen B. Acunto and former undefeated heavyweight champion Rocky Marciano. Sadly, a few months after the AAIB was formed, Marciano was killed in a plane crash. However, the AAIB continued under Acunto's leadership. Determined to preserve Marciano's legacy, the AAIB gives out awards in his name to all of its honorees. And the most unlikely honoree of this or any other year was Holmes, as it was "The Easton Assassin" who made the infamous remark that "Rocky Marciano couldn't carry my jockstrap."

Never mind the fact that Holmes said it in the heat of the moment immediately following his first defeat (a 15-round points loss to Michael Spinks in 1985) that left him a mere one fight short of tying Marciano's unbeaten run of 49 straight. Realizing the repercussions of what he'd said, Holmes immediately apologized, going so far as to call the Marciano family personally. For all intents and purposes, that should have been the end of it. But Marciano is an icon of the highest order. By insulting his memory, even if just temporarily, Holmes' reputation took a major hit.

Marciano and Acunto honor Holmes

But as they say, time heals all wounds. The AAIB, which had never even considered Holmes as an honoree before, relented on the condition that the Marciano family supported the idea. To their delight, no one objected.

Along with Acunto, Lou Marciano, Rocky's nephew, presented Holmes with the award. Said Marciano, "The family forgave him a long time ago. Being that we are emotional people ourselves, it would have been wrong to hold it against him."

Holmes, though, is aware that some others still are. "I hope this puts closure on it and buries the hatchet," he said. "I would have liked to have gotten to know Rocky. As champions, we both shared a bond."

Throughout the afternoon, the loudest ovations were reserved for Holmes, who reciprocated by honoring every autograph request and not leaving until the place was virtually empty. Rocky would have been proud.

—Jack Hirsch

LANE CHANGE

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

Lane: Gettin' it on as a promoter

Mills Lane usually knew when to step in and protect a fighter's safety in the ring as one of boxing's premier referees. Now the former Nevada judge and prosecutor is hoping to protect boxers outside the ring by getting involved in a different side of the sport, starting "Let's Get It On Promotions" in conjunction with Midwest promoter Tony Holden.

Lane was approached by Holden about the venture just before he was going to accept an appointment on the Nevada State Athletic Commission last fall. Lane is hoping to bring a touch of integrity to boxing promotion, and said he's hoping to draw on his own experiences as a professional boxer to relate to the needs of today's fighters.

"I think I can lead these young kids in a good direction," said Lane, who was hoping to promote the company's first show in early-2001. "I think you have to give these kids access to accountants and lawyers; you have to help that young person be successful. And not only be successful in the ring, but also when that small window closes on their boxing careers, if they've taken care of themselves, they'll have something down the road. That's why I wanted to get into this.

"I think a promoter can make money, but I don't think you have to steal from folks to do it. I told Tony we're talking the talk, now we have to walk the walk. My approach to these kids will be to treat them right. I want to be someone who is going to look after their interests. We're going to do that. I know what a fighter goes through."

—Joe Santoliquito

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
12-8-00	Will Taylor W 10 Sammy Ahmad	ESPN2	lh	C+	C	D+
Taylor not exactly exciting, but proficient in solid decision win; Ahmad in over his head						
12-8-00	Charles Brewer KO 1 Esteban Cervantes	ESPN2	sm	B-	D-	C+
For what it's worth, outside Sven Ottke, Cervantes is the best fighter Brewer's faced in years						
12-9-00	**Virgil Hill KO 1 Fabrice Tiozzo**	**Show**	**WBA c**	**A-**	**B-**	**B**
Okay, now we've seen everything						
12-10-00	Tito Mendoza KO 3 Maselino Masoe	FOXSN	m	C	B-	C
Classic example of why average-size middleweights shouldn't fight giant-sized middleweights						
12-15-00	Kelly Pavlik KO 2 Cedric Johnson	ESPN2	jm	C-	B+	B-
It's too early to tell for sure, but it looks like Pavlik can fight a little						
12-15-00	**Davey Hilton W 12 Dingaan Thobela**	**ESPN2**	**WBC sm**	**A-**	**B**	**B+**
No way Thobela was winning decision with fourth Hilton-Stephane Ouellet match looming						
12-15-00	**Eric Morel W 12 Gilberto Keb-Baas**	**ESPN2**	**WBA fl**	**A**	**C+**	**C-**
Keb-Baas had his moments, but couldn't put any together to threaten smooth-boxing Morel						
12-16-00	Winky Wright W 12 Keith Mullings	HBO	jm	B	B+	C
How ridiculous is it that Francisco Castillejo is a champion and Wright isn't?						
12-16-00	**Paul Spadafora W 12 Billy Irwin**	**HBO**	**IBF l**	**A**	**B+**	**D+**
When did David Tua start training Irwin?						
12-16-00	Acelino Freitas KO 1 Daniel Alicea	Show	l	B-	C	B-
Get used to seeing Freitas; with that punch, he's going to be around for a while						
12-16-00	Joe Calzaghe KO 10 Richie Woodhall	Show	sm	B+	B+	B
Good scrap between boyhood pals; Calzaghe might be best in weak division						
12-22-00	Ray Oliveira W 12 Vince Phillips	ESPN2	jw	B	B-	B-
Phillips still can fight a little, but probably shouldn't						
12-29-00	John Bailey W 10 Joel Perez	ESPN2	jw	C	C+	C
Think the scorecards in West Virginia look like the voting ballots in Florida?						
12-29-00	Tyrone Ivory W 4 Scott McCracken	ESPN2	jw	C	A	B
An exciting, well-matched, evenly contested fight between two solid rookies, and the right guy got the decision!						
12-29-00	Carl Daniels W 12 Brian Barbosa	ESPN2	m	B+	B-	C
Best thing that could have happened to Barbosa; if Daniels beat him up, what would Bernard Hopkins have done to him?						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(World title fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox SportsNet; Uni—Univision; Tel—Telemundo

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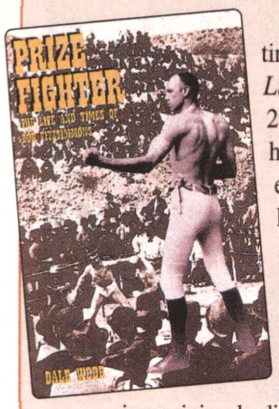


Give author Dale Webb credit for an earnest and sometimes stylish swing, but something about *Prize Fighter: The Life And Times Of Bob Fitzsimmons* (Mainstream Publishing, 208 pages hardcover, £15.99) fails to hit the anvil on the head in its portrayal of the blacksmith who helped shape the early history of boxing's gloved era as middleweight (1891), heavyweight (1897), and light heavyweight (1903) champion of the world.

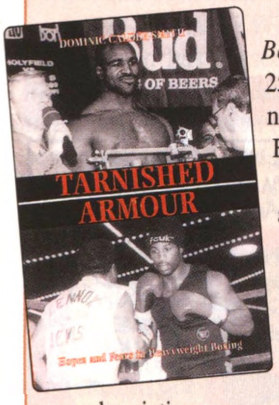
Certainly "Freckled Bob" deserves approbation for the prowess that made him the first triple-crown winner in boxing history. But like Tammy Faye Bakker and her eyeliner, Webb too often lays it on with a trowel: "Huge, brawny men were ignominiously dispatched to the canvas; hardened prize fighters were thoroughly bruised and battered before falling at the great man's feet. The 'Fighting Blacksmith' not only worked out with the tools of his former trade—a hammer and anvil—in order to tone his peak-conditioned body even further, but also continued to hone his lethal finishing power by smashing hardened turnips into pieces with his bare hands."

Are we really to believe, too, that the ring in which Fitz took the middleweight crown from "Nonpareil" Jack Dempsey in New Orleans was bound not by rope but by barbed wire? In that fight, Webb writes that the bald-headed Cornishman scored one of the biggest upsets of all-time by knocking out Dempsey in the 13th round. Yet contemporary accounts relate that Fitz was, if not the betting favorite, at least even-money going into the appropriately roped square.

Furthermore, the chronology of his life is disjointed. Some fights are reported out of their order, and at one point we go from Fitz in the grave to his trial in a New Jersey courtroom for assaulting a creditor.

Portions of the book are entertaining, but like Fitzsimmon's physique—big and buff on top, spindly at the bottom—its unevenness is a trifle jarring.

—Pete Ehrmann



Tarnished Armour: Hopes And Fears In Heavyweight Boxing by Dominic Calder-Smith (Mainstream Publishing, 255 pages hardcover, £15.99) focuses, for reasons that are never clear, on heavyweights of today and the recent past. Britisher Calder-Smith ferrets out bunches of them.

He takes the reader into Hasim Rahman's dressing room after he was kayoed by Oleg Maskaev. He finds Renaldo Snipes at an Italian restaurant in Brooklyn. He provides numerous glimpses and penetrating analyses of Mike Tyson, Evander Holyfield, Obed Sullivan, and a whole lot more.

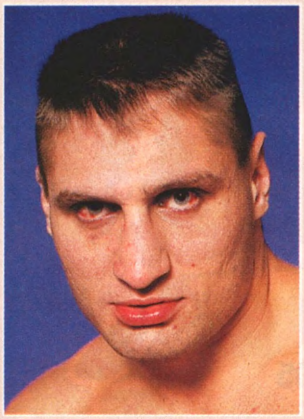
Calder-Smith, a talented writer, has fashioned his book into a personal journey. So while we get some solid, delightful descriptive prose, we also learn much about him and his reactions to what he learns. This includes such details as what he had for breakfast on his second morning in Houston: two poached eggs, home-fried potatoes, bacon, etc., etc.

At times, presumably for the sake of literary flow, the author never quite divulges details that actually are important. He describes a Russian with a pigtail we might assume is Kostya Tszyu, but we aren't told precisely. What's junior welter Tszyu (if it was Tszyu) doing in here among the heavyweights? Well, Calder-Smith happened to run into him.

Getting through the book requires patience. It's a country road, not a freeway, and Calder-Smith takes his time. But he loves boxing and knows the sport, and it shows.

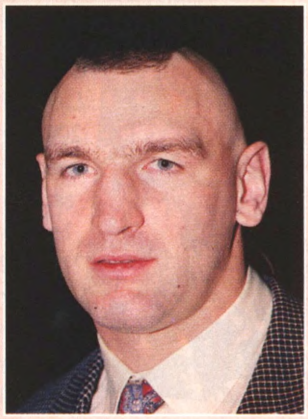
—Ivan Goldman

OUTSIDE THE ROPES



Golota:
Not getting paid in full

It's not exactly Roe vs. Wade from a social significance standpoint, but nonetheless, **Kushner** vs. **King** is headed to the U.S. Supreme Court. Cedric is suing Don for $12-million for alleged tampering with **Hasim Rahman** while "The Rock" was under contract to Kushner in 1998. The lawsuit was originally dismissed by a Federal judge and then by the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals before reaching the highest court in the land ... We reported in the March 2001 issue that former bantamweight champ **Wayne McCullough's** career was in jeopardy because a cyst had been discovered on his brain, but after extensive testing, the cyst was found by doctors to be benign, and "The Pocket Rocket" was declared medically fit to fight. McCullough received the good news in mid-December and was expected to re-apply for his Nevada boxing license shortly thereafter ... More than two months after the fact, a commission ordered by the WBC found that the handwraps used by **Dingaan Thobela** in his super middleweight title victory over **Glenn Catley** were illegal and had not been examined properly before the bout. To the dismay of Catley, however, the WBC opted not to disqualify Thobela, who scored a one-punch stoppage in the 12th round. Instead, Catley has merely been made mandatory challenger to new champion **Davey Hilton** ... It was reported in early-December that **Andrew Golota** would be accepting a 10 percent reduction from the $2-million purse he was supposed to receive for his October quit job vs. **Mike Tyson** ... Two-division former world champion **Vinny Pazienza** legally shortened his name recently to "Vinny Paz." Next step, an ambiguous symbol. Then "The Artist Formerly Known As Paz" ... ESPN boxing analyst **Al Bernstein** had a rough start to his holiday season when his Las Vegas home was damaged in early-December by a fire believed to have been started from molten candle wax spilling onto an artificial Christmas tree. The damage was estimated at $170,000 ... Former European heavyweight champion **Zeljko Mavrovic**, who has been suffering in recent months from an illness doctors have failed to identify and has seen his weight drop to around 200 pounds, announced his retirement in mid-December. The only loss on the 31-year-old Croatian's 27-1 (22) record came in a bid for the WBC title against **Lennox Lewis** ... After 14 years behind bars for a pair of armed robberies, undefeated former Kronk Gym light heavyweight **Ricky Womack** was released from prison in late-December. Womack, 39, has expressed an interest in returning to boxing as a heavyweight ... Detroit junior middleweight **Darrin Morris**, 34, died in mid-October of meningitis. Morris, whose career record was 27-2-1 (17), held a couple of minor belts at 154 pounds during a career spanning from 1986-'97 ... Cruiserweight contender **Ray Lathon**, 34, was shot and killed after a workout in his hometown of St. Louis by a gunman wearing a ski mask. The only loss on Lathon's 22-1 (21) record was a decision defeat to future light heavyweight champion **Montell Griffin** in '94.



Mavrovic:
Retires with mysterious illness

THE PUNCHLINES

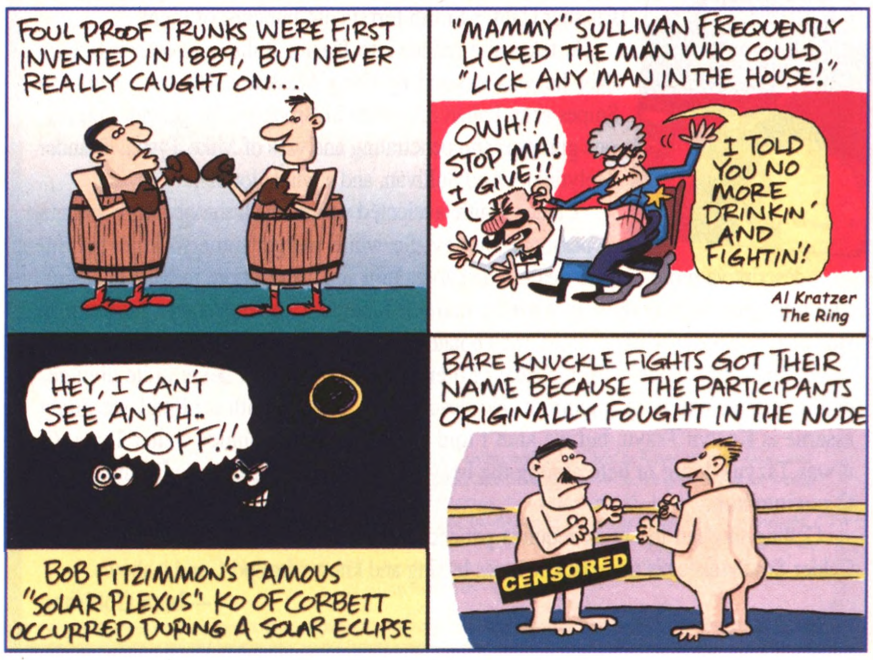
"My daddy got knocked down, but he's not hurt. My daddy's a bad mother."

—Four-year-old Fernando Vargas Jr., speaking to his mother after watching his father go down twice in the opening round against Felix Trinidad

"I outworked his fat ass all night."

—Obed Sullivan, after fighting to a disputed draw with Larry Donald

AL KRATZER'S VIEW



"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

(For period ended January 2, 2001)

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Welterweight
2. **FELIX TRINIDAD**
   Junior Middleweight
3. **ROY JONES**
   Light Heavyweight
4. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
   Welterweight
5. **DIEGO CORRALES**
   Junior Lightweight
6. **NASEEM HAMED**
   Featherweight
7. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Junior Lightweight
8. **LENNOX LEWIS**
   Heavyweight
9. **ERIK MORALES**
   Featherweight
10. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
    Middleweight

HEAVYWEIGHTS: No changes.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: Virgil Hill's upset kayo of Fabrice Tiozzo to win the WBA belt rockets Hill from ninth place to second, while Tiozzo (third last issue) sinks to ninth.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Reggie Johnson has passed the 12-month inactive limit, but as he was scheduled to fight Chris Johnson (current number seven) January 5, Reggie retains the number-four position pending the outcome of that contest.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Davey Hilton's narrow decision victory over Dingaan Thobela to win the WBC title allows the veteran Canadian to crash the rankings at number six, while Thobela (fourth last issue) falls to seventh. Mads Larsen (10th last issue) leaves to make room for Hilton.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Brian Barbosa (formerly seventh) exits following his one-sided decision defeat to Carl Daniels, who is aboard at number nine.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Winky Wright (sixth last issue) jumps to number three after outpointing former WBC champion Keith Mullings. Wright's elevation causes inactive Ike Quartey (third last issue), Francisco Castillejo (fourth last issue), and Harry Simon (formerly fifth) to slip one notch each.

WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: No changes.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: Former IBF champion Paul Ingle (third last issue) suffered a brain injury losing the title to Mbulelo Botile, and is gone from the ratings. Botile zooms from 10th to third. Ingle's departure leaves room for Istvan Kovacs to come aboard at number 10.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

FLYWEIGHTS: Alexander Munoz' kayo of former WBA champion Sornpichai Pisnurachank shakes up the 112-pounders. Munoz debuts at 10, while Pisnurachank (fifth last issue) exits. Also, previously unrated Fernando Montiel stopped Isidro Garcia (10th last issue), knocking him out of the ratings. Fernando, the brother of Alejandro Montiel (currently eighth), is now number nine.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: No changes.

STRAWWEIGHTS: Former IBF champion Zolani Petelo (first last issue) has relinquished the title in order to fight at a higher weight. He will be rated in the appropriate weight class when he fights again. Petelo's departure lifts WBC titlist Jose Aguirre (second last issue) to the top spot. New WBA titlist Keitaro Hoshino gains the second position thanks to his decision over Joma Gamboa, who remains in the third spot.

POUND-FOR-POUND: No changes. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended January 2, 2001

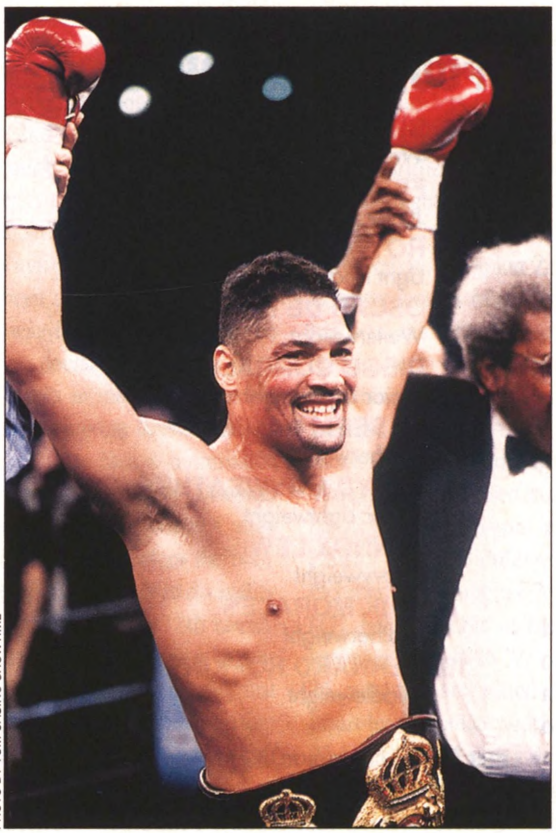


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO SHOWTIME

Virgil Hill cruised up to the number-two spot at 190 pounds

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

In each division, fighters are ranked according to their abilities and accomplishments.

Being champion does not necessarily mean a fighter will be rated at the top of his weight class.

These ratings reflect how the best fighters in the world rate against one another.

Ratings By The Editors

Records By Fight Fax Inc.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

1. LENNOX LEWIS
   England 38-1-1 (WBC/IBF Champ)
2. MIKE TYSON
   Catskill, NY 49-3
3. KIRK JOHNSON
   Canada 30-0-1
4. EVANDER HOLYFIELD
   Fairburn, GA 37-4-1 (WBA Champ)
5. DAVID TUA
   New Zealand 37-2
6. WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
   Ukraine 35-1
7. OLEG MASKAEV
   Staten Island, NY 20-3
8. MICHAEL GRANT
   Norristown, PA 31-1
9. HASIM RAHMAN
   Baltimore, MD 34-2
10. CHRIS BYRD
    Flint, MI 31-2

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

1. FELIX TRINIDAD
   Puerto Rico 39-0 (WBA/IBF Champ)
2. FERNANDO VARGAS
   Oxnard, CA 20-1
3. WINKY WRIGHT
   St. Petersburg, FL 41-3
4. IKE QUARTEY
   Ghana 34-2-1
5. FRANCISCO CASTILLEJO
   Spain 51-4 (WBC Champ)
6. HARRY SIMON
   Namibia 20-0
7. BRONCO McKART
   Monroe, MI 42-3
8. YORY BOY CAMPAS
   Mexico 76-4
9. TONY MARSHALL
   Albany, NY 34-8-6
10. SHIBATA FLORES
    Mexico 41-8

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

1. NASEEM HAMED
   England 35-0
2. ERIK MORALES
   Mexico 39-0
3. MBULELO BOTILE
   South Africa 27-1 (IBF Champ)
4. DERRICK GAINER
   Pensacola, FL 34-5 (WBA Champ)
5. GUTY ESPADAS
   Mexico 33-2 (WBC Champ)
6. JOHNNY TAPIA
   Albuquerque, NM 48-2-2
7. FRED NORWOOD
   St. Louis, MO 37-1-1
8. JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ
   Mexico 33-2
9. MANUEL MEDINA
   Mexico 58-11
10. ISTVAN KOVACS
    Germany 19-0

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

1. MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA
   Mexico 52-3
2. BONES ADAMS
   Henderson, KY 40-3-3 (WBA Champ)
3. LEHLO LEDWABA
   South Africa 31-1-1 (IBF Champ)
4. WILLIE JORRIN
   Sacramento, CA 27-0 (WBC Champ)
5. NESTOR GARZA
   Mexico 38-2
6. ENRIQUE SANCHEZ
   Mexico 28-1-1
7. MANNY PACQUAIO
   Philippines 29-2
8. ANTONIO CERMENO
   Venezuela 38-3
9. OSCAR LARIOS
   Mexico 38-2-1
10. MICHAEL BRODIE
    England 29-1

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

1. PAULIE AYALA
   Ft. Worth, TX 31-1 (WBA Champ)
2. TIM AUSTIN
   Cincinnati, OH 21-0-1 (IBF Champ)
3. VEERAPOL SAHAPROM
   Thailand 28-1 (WBC Champ)
4. JOHNNY BREDAHL
   Denmark 48-2
5. ADAN VARGAS
   Mexico 35-2-1
6. JORGE ELIECER JULIO
   Colombia 42-2
7. JORGE LACIERVA
   Mexico 18-3-3
8. RICARDO BARAJAS
   Mexico 21-1-1
9. MAURICIO MARTINEZ
   Panama 19-3-1
10. CUAUHTEMOC GOMEZ
    Mexico 48-8

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 190 pounds

1. **JUAN CARLOS GOMEZ**
   Germany *32-0 (WBC Champ)*
2. **VIRGIL HILL**
   Bismarck, ND *46-3 (WBA Champ)*
3. **VASSILIY JIROV**
   Kazakhstan *26-0 (IBF Champ)*
4. **JOHNNY NELSON**
   England *38-12-1*
5. **MARCELO DOMINGUEZ**
   Argentina *30-3-1*
6. **ARTHUR WILLIAMS**
   Pensacola, FL *33-5-1*
7. **CARL THOMPSON**
   England *27-5*
8. **JAMES TONEY**
   Las Vegas, NV *60-4-2*
9. **FABRICE TIOZZO**
   France *42-2*
10. **LOUIS AZILLE**
    Jersey City, NJ *14-0-2*

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight limit: 175 pounds

1. **ROY JONES**
   Pensacola, FL *43-1 (WBC/WBA/IBF Champ)*
2. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI**
   Germany *43-0*
3. **ERIC HARDING**
   Philadephia, PA *19-1-1*
4. **REGGIE JOHNSON**
   Houston, TX *40-6-1*
5. **DAVID TELESCO**
   Port Chester, NY *23-3*
6. **MONTELL GRIFFIN**
   Chicago, IL *39-3*
7. **CHRIS JOHNSON**
   Canada *26-1-1*
8. **ANTONIO TARVER**
   Orlando, FL *16-1*
9. **GREG WRIGHT**
   Bronx, NY *18-6-2*
10. **DERRICK HARMON**
    Chicago, IL *20-1*

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

1. **SVEN OTTKE**
   Germany *21-0 (IBF Champ)*
2. **JOE CALZAGHE**
   Wales *30-0*
3. **BRUNO GIRARD**
   France *38-2-1 (WBA Champ)*
4. **CHARLES BREWER**
   Philadelphia, PA *36-7*
5. **THOMAS TATE**
   Houston, TX *38-6*
6. **DAVEY HILTON**
   Canada *39-2-3 (WBC Champ)*
7. **DINGAAN THOBELA**
   South Africa *40-8-2*
8. **GLENN CATLEY**
   England *26-4*
9. **BYRON MITCHELL**
   Ozark, AL *21-1-1*
10. **JAMES BUTLER**
    Bronx, NY *17-1*

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
   Philadelphia, PA *38-2-1 (IBF Champ)*
2. **WILLIAM JOPPY**
   Washington, D.C. *32-1-1 (WBA Champ)*
3. **KEITH HOLMES**
   Washington, D.C. *35-2 (WBC Champ)*
4. **ARMAND KRAJNC**
   Sweden *24-0*
5. **ANTWUN ECHOLS**
   Davenport, IA *24-4-1*
6. **HASSINE CHERIFI**
   France *31-4-1*
7. **ANDREW COUNCIL**
   Washington, D.C. *30-7-3*
8. **SYD VANDERPOOL**
   Canada *28-2*
9. **CARL DANIELS**
   St. Louis, MO *47-3-1*
10. **HOWARD EASTMAN**
    England *30-0*

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

1. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Pomona, CA *36-0 (WBC Champ)*
2. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
   Whittier, CA *32-2*
3. **VERNON FORREST**
   Atlanta, GA *31-0*
4. **OBA CARR**
   Detroit, MI *52-3-1*
5. **WILFREDO RIVERA**
   Puerto Rico *31-4-1*
6. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
   Denmark *22-0*
7. **SHANNAN TAYLOR**
   Australia *28-0-1*
8. **ANDREW LEWIS**
   Guyana *20-0-1*
9. **DERRELL COLEY**
   Capitol Heights, MD *34-2-2*
10. **KOFI JANTUAH**
    Ghana *20-0*

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

1. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
   Australia *25-1-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **ZAB JUDAH**
   Brooklyn, NY *25-0 (IBF Champ)*
3. **SHARMBA MITCHELL**
   Washington, D.C. *47-2 (WBA Champ)*
4. **ANTONIO DIAZ**
   Coachella, CA *33-3*
5. **ENER JULIO**
   Colombia *21-3*
6. **RANDALL BAILEY**
   Miami, FL *22-1*
7. **TERRONN MILLETT**
   St. Louis, MO *22-2-1*
8. **MICKY WARD**
   Lowell, MA *35-10*
9. **JOHN-JOHN MOLINA**
   Puerto Rico *52-6*
10. **REGGIE GREEN**
    Clinton, MD *33-4*

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

1. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
   Mexico *41-4-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
   Denver, CO *30-2-1*
3. **PAUL SPADAFORA**
   Pittsburgh, PA *32-0 (IBF Champ)*
4. **TAKANORI HATAKEYAMA**
   Japan *24-1-2 (WBA Champ)*
5. **CESAR BAZAN**
   Mexico *38-3-1*
6. **ANGEL MANFREDY**
   Gary, IN *34-5-1*
7. **ARTUR GRIGORIAN**
   Uzbekistan *31-0*
8. **COLIN DUNNE**
   England *32-1*
9. **JESSE JAMES LEIJA**
   San Antonio, TX *41-5-2*
10. **GILBERTO SERRANO**
    Venezuela *20-5-1*

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

1. **DIEGO CORRALES**
   Sacramento, CA *33-0*
2. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Grand Rapids, MI *24-0 (WBC Champ)*
3. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
   Miami, FL *23-0 (WBA Champ)*
4. **ACELINO FREITAS**
   Brazil *28-0*
5. **STEVE FORBES**
   Las Vegas, NV *19-1 (IBF Champ)*
6. **JONGKWON BAEK**
   South Korea *21-1-1*
7. **LAKVA SIM**
   Mongolia *12-2-1*
8. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
   Mexico *32-1*
9. **YONG SOO CHOI**
   South Korea *27-3-1*
10. **ROBERTO GARCIA**
    Oxnard, CA *33-2*

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

1. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
   North Korea *23-2-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **LEO GAMEZ**
   Venezuela *33-7-1 (WBA Champ)*
3. **FELIX MACHADO**
   Venezuela *20-3-1 (IBF Champ)*
4. **IN JOO CHO**
   South Korea *18-1*
5. **GERRY PENALOSA**
   Philippines *42-3-2*
6. **JESUS ROJAS**
   Venezuela *33-8-3*
7. **HIDEKI TODAKA**
   Japan *17-3-1*
8. **YOKTHAI SITHOAR**
   Thailand *22-1-1*
9. **SAMSON TOYOTA-THAILAND**
   Thailand *38-0*
10. **ADONIS RIVAS**
    Nicaragua *16-1-1*

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

1. **ERIC MOREL**
   Madison, WI *28-0 (WBA Champ)*
2. **IRENE PACHECO**
   Colombia *25-0 (IBF Champ)*
3. **MALCOLM TUNACAO**
   Philippines *11-0-1 (WBC Champ)*
4. **HAWK MAKEPULA**
   South Africa *18-1*
5. **CHATCHAI DUTCHBOY GYM**
   Thailand *37-2*
6. **MEDGOEN TOYOTA-THAILAND**
   Thailand *20-1*
7. **SAEN SOR PLOENCHIT**
   Thailand *38-1*
8. **ALEJANDRO MONTIEL**
   Mexico *44-3*
9. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
   Mexico *20-0-1*
10. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
    Venezuela *15-0*

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

1. **RICARDO LOPEZ**
   Mexico *49-0-1 (IBF Champ)*
2. **YOSAM CHOI**
   South Korea *22-1 (WBC Champ)*
3. **PICHIT C. SIRIWAT**
   Thailand *22-1*
4. **BEBIS MENDOZA**
   Colombia *27-0 (WBA Champ)*
5. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
   Nicaragua *27-2-1*
6. **SAMAN SORJATURONG**
   Thailand *42-3-1*
7. **MELCHOR COB-CASTRO**
   Mexico *59-6-4*
8. **WILL GRIGSBY**
   St. Paul, MN *15-2-1*
9. **JORGE ARCE**
   Mexico *25-3-1*
10. **HIDENOBU HONDA**
    Japan *22-1*

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

1. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
   Mexico *24-1-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **KEITARO HOSHINO**
   Japan *21-6 (WBA Champ)*
3. **JOMA GAMBOA**
   Philippines *29-5-1*
4. **NOEL ARAMBULET**
   Venezuela *12-2-1*
5. **CHANA PORPAOIN**
   Thailand *41-1-2*
6. **WANDEE SINGWANGCHA**
   Thailand *25-4*
7. **SONGKRAM PORPAOIN**
   Thailand *20-2-1*
8. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
   Columbia *32-2*
9. **JOSE GARCIA**
   Colombia *22-5-1*
10. **DANIEL REYES**
    Colombia *24-0*

NEW FACES

JULIO DIAZ

Lightweight

By Joe Santoliquito

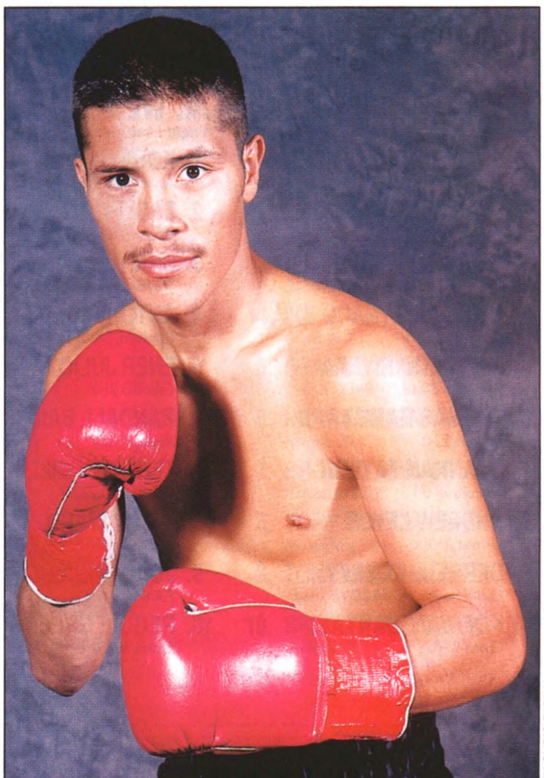


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

PRO RECORD

1999		
Feb. 6	Carlos Rodriguez, Cathedral City, CA	KO 1
March 6	Juan Rivas, Indio, CA	KO 3
April 17	Oscar Jackson, Indio	KO 2
May 7	Francisco Maldonado, Las Vegas	KO 1
Aug. 6	Fausto Sandoval, Tijuana, Mexico	KO 1
Aug. 20	Antonio Gonzalez, Temecula, CA	W 4
Aug. 27	Aaron Flores, Tijuana	KO 3
Sept. 17	Mahan Washington, Las Vegas	W 6
Nov. 5	Ramon Gomez, Temecula	KO 1
Dec. 3	Terry Evans, Temecula	KO 2
Dec. 18	Juan Colin, Indio	W 6
2000		
Feb. 4	Jose Manjarrez, Indio	W 4
March 11	Alfredo Bahena, Indio	KO 3
March 25	Jose Montes, Huntington Park, CA	KO 2
May 19	Luis Lizarraga, Beverly Hills, CA	KO 6
June 16	Gustavo Cuello, Indio	KO 5
Aug. 27	Awel Abdulai, Las Vegas	KO 5
Oct. 8	Gerardo Mijares, Las Vegas	KO 3
Dec. 2	Eduardo Perez, Las Vegas	KO 6

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
19	19	0	0	15

One of Lee Espinoza's first recollections of Julio Diaz' fighting ability was not promising. Diaz was involved in a local bout, down and crying as his opponent was kicking him into submission. That's when Espinoza felt it was time to throw in the towel and break up the brawl, saving the smaller Julio from his older brother Antonio. Julio was just six at the time, giving up about four inches in reach and close to 20 pounds to nine-year-old Antonio. The front-yard fights were commonplace at the Diaz home, with little Julio catching the brunt of it.

Espinoza, the long-time trainer of the Diaz brothers, laughs at the thought now, because no one, that's *no one*, kicks Julio Diaz around anymore. Not even Antonio, a junior welterweight contender who put on a gutty display against Shane Mosley last November before losing by sixth-round knockout. Julio is emerging as the best of the fighting Diaz brothers from Coachella, California.

Diaz possesses an inborn toughness, a characteristic cultivated through time as the second youngest and smallest of the five Diaz brothers. Of his eight matches in 2000, Julio finished seven opponents inside the distance. In fact, his 2000 campaign was so impressive, *USA Today* boxing writer Dan Rafael named Julio the newspaper's Prospect of the Year.

Rafael saw Julio twice last year, when he scored knockouts over veteran Eduardo Perez (KO 6) and tough Awel Abdulai (KO 5). Perez had faced seasoned pros Jorge Paez, John-John Molina, and Jeff Mayweather. Abdulai came in with a reputation for being able to take a punch and had never been knocked out—that is until he met Julio.

"I like Julio because he can throw both hands with power," Rafael said. "In the long run, he could be better than Antonio. I saw him against Perez, and it showed Julio isn't beating bums. Julio dropped him with a right hand in the second round and he showed poise by not going for the knockout right away. He just really needs experience; that's the main thing.

"What made me select Julio as our Prospect of the Year was the fight against Abdulai, who drew with Jermaine Fields. Diaz drilled this guy with one shot and floored him. That was impres-

(Continued on page 94)

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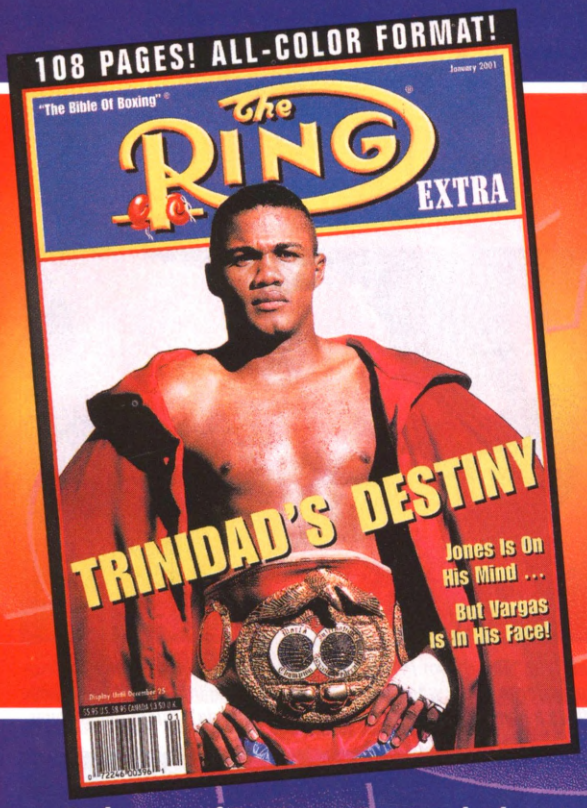

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CAMERA CLICKS

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

It just wouldn't be Christmas without gloves and punching bags under the tree and "Baby" Joe Mesi climbing down your chimney. We can hear the carolers now: "I'm dreaming of a white heavyweight ... "

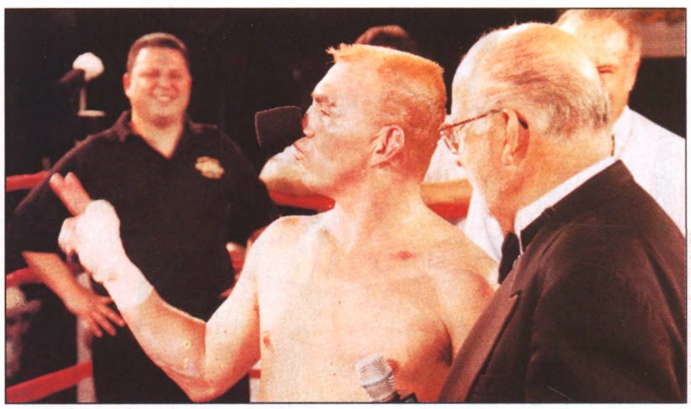


PHOTO BY DALE S. HAUSNER

They don't call him "The Clown Prince Of Boxing" for nothing. Former featherweight champion Jorge Paez, who despite fading boxing abilities still has a nose for comedy, finds a home for ring announcer Danny Valdivia's microphone cover.

Hector Camacho Jr. doesn't look especially "Macho" here, clinging onto exuberant promoter Dan Goossen like a lost child who just found his mommy. (If Goossen had any sense, he'd tell that child to stay lost.)

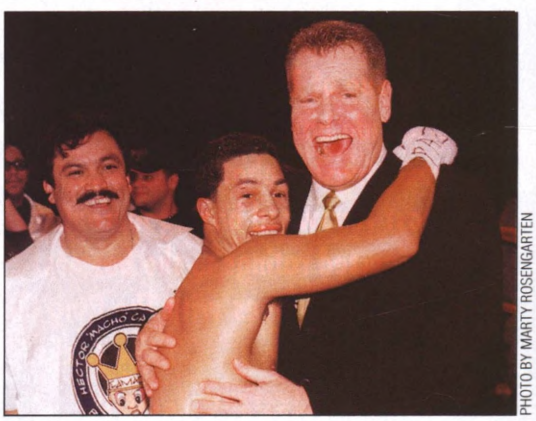
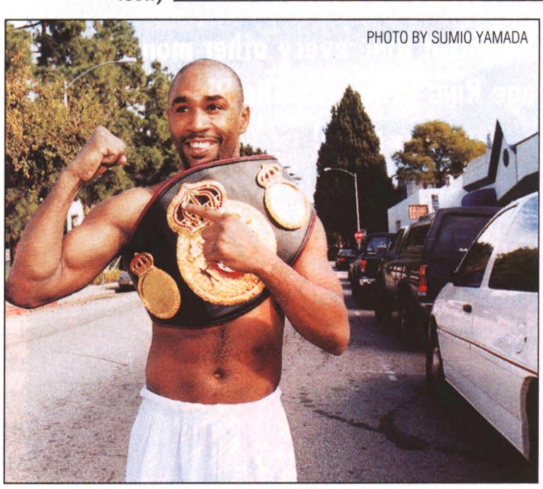


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA



Cuban refugee Joel Casamayor still has a lot to learn about American hitch-hiking protocol. First off, Joel, you use your thumb, not your whole fist, and secondly, the exposed-midriff technique works much better for women than it does for men.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Brazilian junior lightweight sensation Acelino "Popo" Freitas shows that he knows more than one way to reach out and touch somebody. After his one-round annihilation of Daniel Alicea in Manchester, England, in December, Freitas was quick to pick up the cell phone and let the folks back home know how he did.

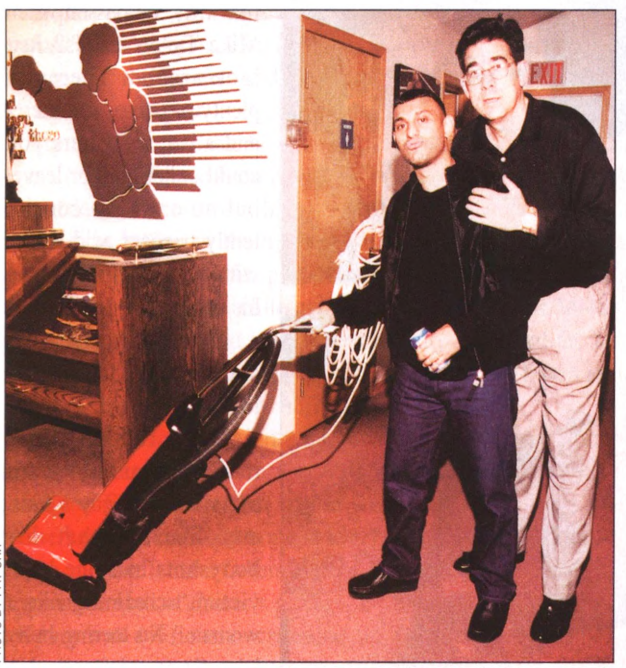


PHOTO BY PAT ORR

If you want to earn your way into the International Boxing Hall of Fame, you have to pay your dues. Prince Naseem Hamed, a borderline Hall candidate at this point in his career, knows a little sucking up never hurt anyone, so with IBHOF Director Ed Brophy supervising, Naz recently spent a day vacuuming the floors in Canastota.

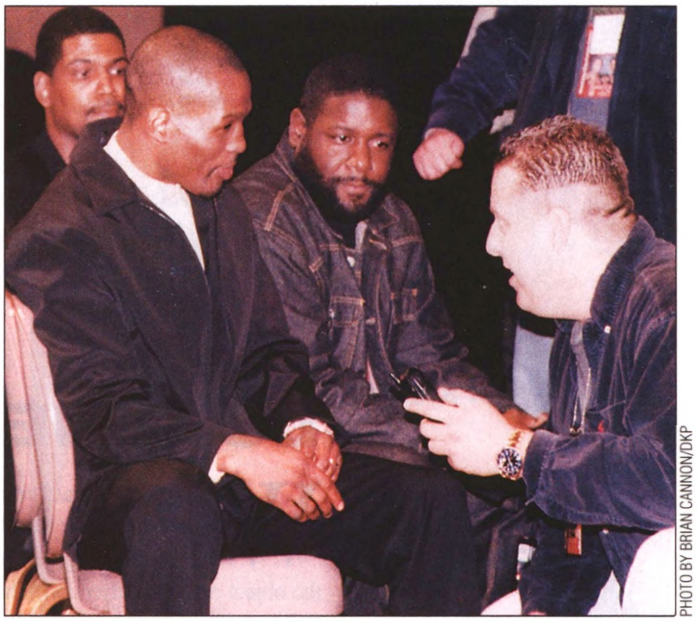


PHOTO BY BRIAN CANNON/DKP

When a reporter approaches Bernard Hopkins for an interview, there are two things he must come prepared with. First, he must have a question ready. And second, he must have at least a dozen blank audio tapes handy so he can get down the entire answer to that question.

NOSTALGIA CORNER

Old rivals ready for one more round: More than a quarter-century after they fought, former heavyweight champions Jersey Joe Walcott and Joe Louis, both 62 at the time, met up at Gleason's Gym in New York. Thank goodness the heavybag was there to keep them apart.

RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

LOATHE AND BEHOLD

What a choker, that Fernando Vargas. There he was, primed to take the next huge step and ascend to a truly elite level, and he blew it big time. That's right, "Ferocious Fernando" was on the verge of becoming the villain boxing badly needs, the guy we love to hate, the object of our disaffection. Then he went and screwed it all up by pouring out his sweat, blood, and testosterone for 11-plus rounds against Felix Trinidad, rising from knockdowns, shaking off low blows, and even acting fairly humble in defeat.

Geez, talk about dropping the ball.

It's too bad things played out the way they did because Vargas sure looked like a future all-time grate, the kind of guy ticketbuyers could have one day saluted with a huge, foam middle finger. After all, he got in trouble with the law, fought outside the ring, hung around with a posse called the Ferocious Squad, tried to spit on an opponent he'd decked, talked down Oscar De La Hoya (not necessarily a bad thing, except that the guy doing the yapping needs a fatter resume than Vargas'), and rode around in an ostentatious Ferocious Mobile, a 30-foot, converted Lexus SUV equipped with everything from a mirrored ceiling to an electric fireplace. (What? No wine cellar?)

Isn't it sad to see so much potential wasted? It's even sadder when you realize that we might not have anyone to work up a good healthy hatred for in the years ahead. To whom will the torch, the one that draws our abhorrence to its flame like a fly, be passed when Mike Tyson retires? Just look around. There are plenty of heroes out there, and a lot of fighters you could either take or leave, but no one who consistently triggers acid reflux with the mere mention of his name.

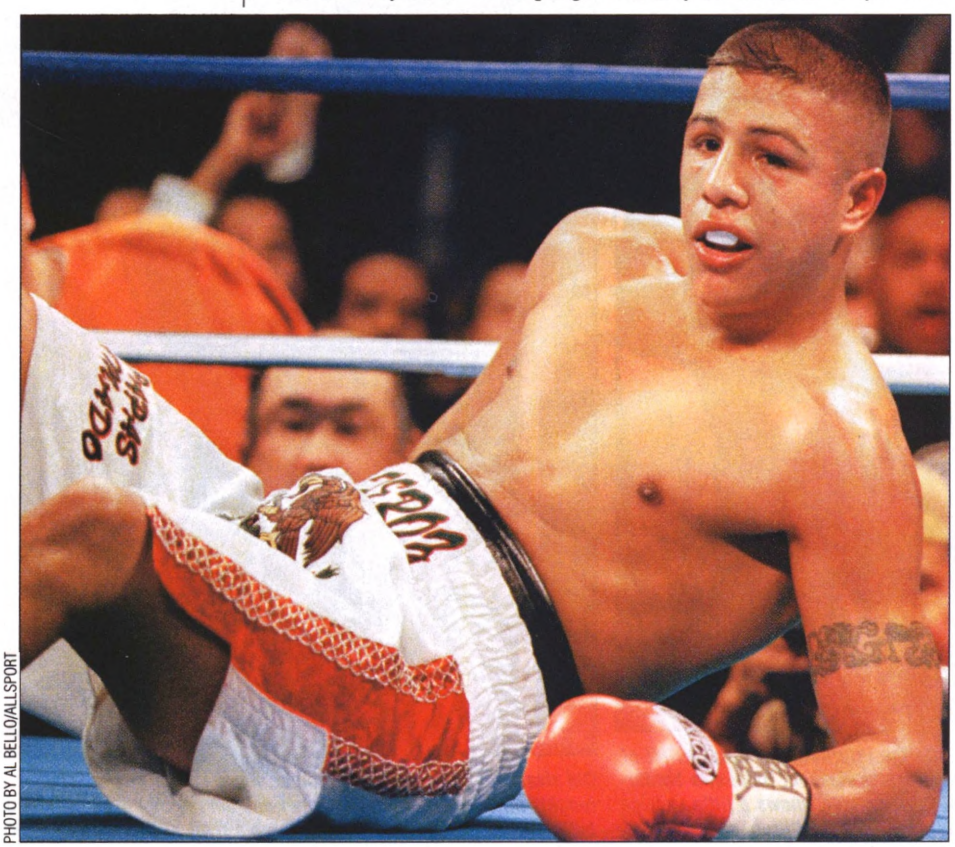


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

Vargas: Not such as bad guy after all

There's no second coming of "Leg-Iron" Mike, who dedicated fights to rappers, bit a rival's ear, said he wanted to eat another guy's kids, and boasted that his bodyshots had one kayo victim "screaming like a woman." No leering bully like Sonny Liston. No stone cold bad guy like the original George Foreman, who could actually inspire you to shout your-

self hoarse rooting for Boone Kirkman and four other pugs to get lucky against him during a made-for-TV fiasco. No young Hector Camacho, who vowed to "take your money" if you walked down his street and challenged all the "niggers" in his weight class. Not even a sharp-tongued putdown artist like Greg Haugen, the only man to ever be declared Public Enemy Number One in Providence, Rhode Island, *and* Mexico City.

Who's out there poised to throw his or her black hat into the ring and run for villain? Andrew Golota? A great candidate once, but more pathetic than loathsome these days after so many surrenders. Roy Jones? *Hmmm.* Some real substance there. After all, this guy makes Sugar Ray Leonard look humble. But no, it's impossible to hate someone who presented the game with the rare gift of a unified title in 1999 and hasn't yet let the alphabet thieves steal it away from us.

How about one of the distaff dukers? Well, Laila Ali and Christy Martin can be pretty tough to endure, but women's boxing isn't significant enough to engender real hatred. Tony Ayala Jr.? Not worth the effort when you consider where he might soon be. De La Hoya? Can't work up a froth for a guy who fights so many tough guys. Ike Ibeabuchi? Can't hate what you can't see. Floyd Mayweather? There are some things to hate about him, yes, but he doesn't have enough of a body of work yet. You can see the problem here. There are lots of annoying characters, but nobody who'd be really worthy of getting doused with a super-sized cup of urine by the crowd at the old Olympic Auditorium.

Maybe the tone of less provocation was set when Foreman reinvented himself as a Teddy bear following his 10-year retirement. Or when Bible-quoting Evander Holyfield regained the heavyweight belt that had been worn by a number of stomach-churners through the years. Whatever the case, it seems that nobody nowadays buys tickets and orders pay-per-view for the main purpose of rooting *against* someone (except, of course, against Tyson). But the antihero has always been as much a part of the game as the canvas. And he doesn't have to be a Muhammad Ali to have an impact.

My thoughts go back 17 years, to a cold night at the East End Arena (it should have been called the Ass End Arena) in Shirley, Long Island. The crowd, which showed up only to cheer on local hero Kevin Moley in the main event, viewed the undercard as something akin to the sales pitch that precedes your "free" visit to a racquetball club. But while everyone was waiting for Moley's appearance, a four-round prelim unexpectedly generated the kind of vein-bulging passion that made a dome full of WWF fans seem like the crowd at a Johnny Mathis concert.

It's hard to forget that matchup of clubfighters Tony Corrado and John Martiri. Corrado was trained by former heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson, whose walk up the ring steps even before he was introduced brought everyone to his feet and made it all the more offensive when Martiri chose to taunt, mimic, and laugh at the Hall of Famer's protege. By the final round, the entire building was deliriously screaming for Corrado and praying for Martiri's dismemberment. Much to the dismay of all those shouting nasty things about his relatives, Martiri won by decision, but his incendiary antics gave what would have been a yawn-inspiring card real juice for the rest of the night.

Sports fans need athletes and teams to root against almost as much as they need athletes and teams to root for. (Let's hear the chorus of boos for the stockpiled New York Yankees and arrogant Dallas Cowboys, for Andre Agassi and the Williams sisters.) And if you want to test which exercise evokes more true passion, just judge how much more tired you are after cheering against someone for 12 rounds or nine innings or 48 minutes than you are when you pull for them.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

Laila: Annoying but insignificant

Maybe boxing's next provocateur is out there right now, but we don't fully realize it. Perhaps he'll ride in on a magic carpet instead of a black horse. Yes, megalomaniac Prince Naseem Hamed could be the guy, especially now that he's even gone so far as to tell us all how we should worship. But The Prince has this way of pulling back at just the point you've had about enough of him. Plus, he's exciting and unpredictable, and he finally appears willing to upgrade his competition. In the long run, he's probably not the man for the job.

Damn that Fernando Vargas! He had it all going for him and didn't even know it. Now, after the grit and character he displayed on the most mettle-testing night of his life, we'll probably never look at him the same way again.

Don't you just … hate that? ■

DIGGING DEEP

By Ivan Goldman

OSCAR: BETRAYED BY HIMSELF

How did Oscar De La Hoya go about firing famed cutman Chuck Bodak?"

"He didn't have the balls to do it himself," replied Bodak, whom I ran into at some club-fights a while ago. "He had one of his flunkies do it. The guy's got no class."

It's uncharacteristic of Bodak, an easygoing guy who cares little for money, to complain about fighters he's worked with. But there's something about "The Golden Boy" that brings out torrents of hostility from those around him. Like a slug, he leaves a trail behind him—a trail of betrayal.

These betrayals go both ways. He screws his associates, they screw him. Trying to figure who went first is like trying to learn which four-year-old fighting over a crayon is the rightful owner. Good luck.

Back in his amateur days, De La Hoya took money and other assistance from a string of trainers and managers who one by one discovered he no longer returned their phone calls. When Oscar finally did sign, it was with Robert Mittleman and Steve Nelson. Despite their legal contract, they were soon left behind with all the others, wondering what the heck happened.

Recently added to the list of De La Hoya's betrayers and betrayees were Bodak, trainer Robert Alcazar, and even promoter Bob Arum, who steered Oscar's career like a master mariner through a North Atlantic storm.

De La Hoya's ex-girlfriend Shanna Moakler, the mother of his daughter, changed the locks on his multimillion-dollar palace in Bel Air, California, leaving him on the outside looking in. Then, according to legal papers filed by De La Hoya, she threw the mother of all parties in his house to celebrate the end of their relationship.

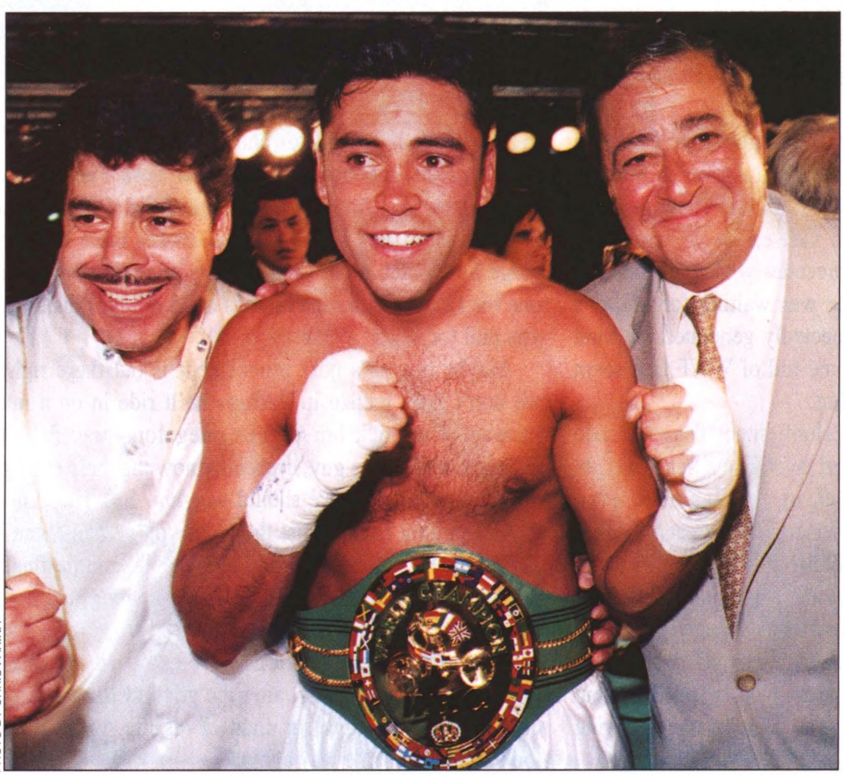


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

It wasn't so long ago that Alcazar, De La Hoya, and Arum all got along

Oscar sued her and her parents. Lawsuits involving people close to him are no stranger to De La Hoya. He's been sued by Mike Hernandez, once his closest adviser, and Arum. De La Hoya and Arum were once so close Oscar gave him his Olympic gold medal.

Los Angeles sports writer Tim Kawakami wrote a De La Hoya biography that began with a copy of a pleading, embarrassing letter Oscar wrote to his ex-girlfriend Veronica Peralta. This constituted a double-teaming of betrayal from Peralta and Kawakami, De La Hoya's ex-golfing buddy.

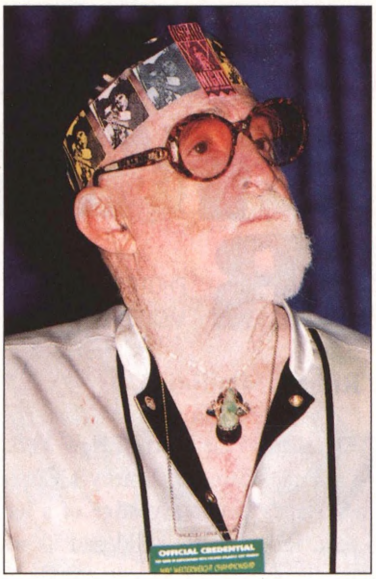
It's easy to see Oscar doesn't

know whom to trust. But then, who can trust Oscar?

His is a life out of control. It's hard to tell whether he's a singer, a golfer, or a candlestick maker. Boxing is no longer at his center. And it's clear he hasn't figured out what to establish in its place.

For years De La Hoya has lived in an Elvis cocoon patrolled by schools of private barracuda who represent various marketing, agentry, and showbiz interests. These people who make everyday decisions for him know little of boxing. Yet if it weren't for the career Oscar shaped with his fists, they wouldn't give him the time of day.

I attended the first two annual black-tie banquets for the foundation named for De La Hoya. They were crammed with Hollywood glittermongers. I doubt they're De La Hoya's friends. I doubt they're anybody's friends.



Bodak won't be littering his head with Oscar stickers anymore

The last two years, no one in De La Hoya's entourage thought to invite a representative of this magazine. It's just as well. Fewer and fewer boxing people attend. The last time I went, I had to make arrangements though a woman flunky of Oscar's who gave some of the nastiest phone this side of Baghdad.

Even before he lost his championship in his thrilling battle with Shane Mosley, De La Hoya was losing interest in boxing. In a TV interview, he said his looks were more important to him than his boxing career. His attendance at fight cards dropped off.

When I interviewed him after his first victory over Julio Cesar Chavez, De La Hoya referred repeatedly to his undefeated record. Retiring as an undefeated champion—keeping that goose egg on his record—was vital to him.

De La Hoya lost a piece of his soul when he got jobbed against Felix Trinidad. Perhaps worse, he saw those tapes of himself running for the last 3½ rounds.

In his fight against Mosley, De La Hoya never took a step back. But the clever Mosley used De La Hoya's phenomenal courage against him, inviting him into traps and making him pay for being there.

De La Hoya doesn't fear his opponents. He fears losing to his opponents, which is not the same thing. In proper doses, fear can keep fighters from getting careless. But when they're wrapped in the fear of losing, it's difficult for them to fight their best fight.

I once asked Mosley—the one man who truly, unquestionably defeated De La Hoya—whether he planned to retire undefeated. "No," he answered immediately. "To get me to retire, someone's going to have to show me. Someone's going to have to beat me."

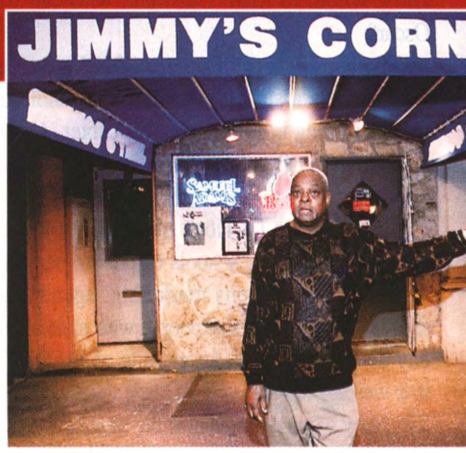
That has to be the greatest temperament a fighter can have. Combine it with Mosley's magnificent talent, and it's a package that both tantalizes and tears at De La Hoya, a man who's been betrayed most of all by himself. ■

De La Hoya stood and fought against Mosley—and it cost him

BEING THERE

JIMMY'S CORNER

PHOTOS BY
MARTY ROSENGARTEN



Glenn outside of his saloon

IF YOU GO

Location: 140 West 44th Street, between 6th & 7th Avenues, New York, NY 10036 (within walking distance of both Grand Central and Penn Stations); phone: 212-221-9510.

Hours of Operation: 11 a.m. to 4 a.m., every day of the year. Although there is no kitchen, lunch spreads are often put out.

Who to look out for: You won't find a more welcoming host or charming raconteur than Jimmy Glenn. Ask him about any one of the hundreds of photos on the wall, and he will spin an interesting yarn. During fight weeks, you can find a veritable who's who of boxing's elite talking shop there.

Advice to greenhorns: Even though your senses might be overwhelmed with pugilistic lore, Jimmy's is not just for boxing buffs. On the night of this writer's visit, there was a man reading a paperback book at the bar, single women talking alone at tables, suits discussing business, and theatrical types studying lines. Because it is located in such a recently transformed make-believe area, locals in the know are most grateful to have such a saloon in their midst.

Jimmy hobnobs with patrons Allison and Molly

By Robert Mladinich

Nestled in the heart of New York's Times Square, Jimmy's Corner stands out as a vestige of a long ago past. Progress has bulldozed its way through the area in recent years, ridding it of ubiquitous sex emporiums, prostitutes, three-card monte dealers, assorted hucksters and hustlers, and a runaway crime epidemic. With Times Square now resembling an urban family theme park, the quintessential neighborhood saloon provides a welcome relief from the glitter. Jimmy Glenn, the 70-year-old owner who doubles as one of boxing's busiest trainers and cutmen, originally picked the once-seedy location in 1971 because it was just blocks away from the fabled Times Square Gym, which he owned until it fell victim to the wrecking ball in 1996.

"I've seen a lot of changes over the years, most of them for the better," said Glenn, who has worked thousands of corners during his more than a half-century in boxing. "When I first opened, there was so much riffraff in the neighborhood, I had to hang a sign that said 'Unescorted ladies not allowed.' Now I've got construction workers, businessmen, diplomats, single women, and tourists coming in every day. This is an old-fashioned neighborhood bar. I would never change that."

When not out of town on a boxing assignment, Glenn hobnobs with his customers every night until closing. Because the walls, as well as the bar, are covered with hundreds of fight posters, photos, and assorted artifacts, more times than not they want to talk boxing.

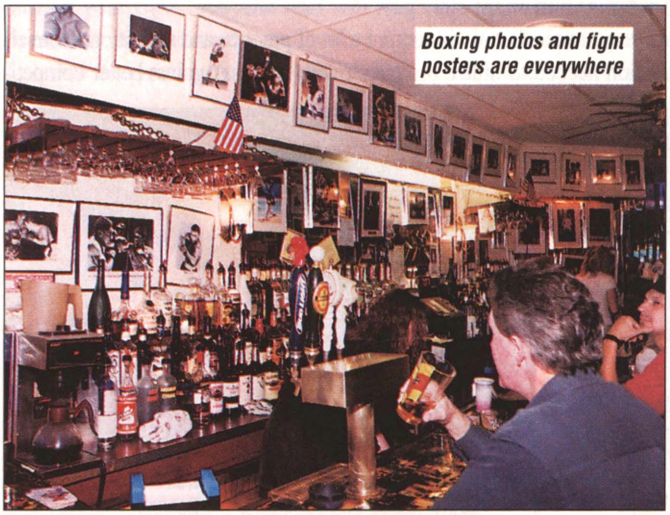
"I talk boxing with a lot of non-boxing people, and the funny thing is they always know more than me," said Glenn with a twinkle. "I got very good at listening and yessing them."

Glenn is thrilled when there is local action at either Madison Square Garden or the Hammerstein Ballroom, because the bar is always inundated with genuine boxing people in the days leading up to the fights. Shane Mosley stopped in the day before he defended the WBC welterweight title against Antonio Diaz in November '00, and Cedric Kushner and Dan Goossen dropped in afterward.

Ray Robinson and Buddy McGirt guard the coat rack

Jimmy's Corner also has quite a cinematic history. It was used for several indoor scenes in the 1980 film classic *Raging Bull*, including the one where Robert DeNiro, portraying Jake LaMotta, was preparing to go on stage as a stand-up comedian.

Barmaid Anique shows a customer her fighting form



Boxing photos and fight posters are everywhere

Customers are surrounded by boxing lore

Glenn began what seems like a lifetime in the sport as a Golden Gloves boxer. After amassing a 14-2 amateur record in the late-'40s, which included a decision loss to Floyd Patterson, he focused his attention on training and has never looked back. He currently trains cruiserweight prospect Glenn Robinson, as well as heavyweight upstarts Kelvin Hale and Jameel McCline. In the past, he worked with perennial light heavyweight contender Bobby Cassidy and Terrence Alli, who challenged Julio Cesar Chavez for the junior welter title. When Floyd Patterson fought Muhammad Ali for the second time, Glenn worked the corner of his old nemesis. He also worked Mike Tyson's corner against Bruce Seldon.

Glenn recently received a ringing endorsement from a British businessman who happened into the bar during a night of revelry. He subsequently got the bar listed in a British travel guide, then sent Glenn a cherished letter that is prominently displayed on the wall. "Dinner on the 107th floor [of the World Trade Center] came in a poor second to the atmosphere and friendliness experienced in Jimmy's Corner," he wrote.

Glenn was more than happy to accept the compliment because he views the bar not only as a testament to his love of the game, but also to his unbridled affection for boxers, regardless of their level of talent.

"So many people think that all fighters are tough guys, but most of them are babies once they're out of the ring," Glenn said. "People don't understand that. I have a story for every single fighter on these walls. This place is as much for them as it is for me." ■

THE A, B, C & DEAS OF BOXING

By Tommy Deas

THE RIGHT CROSS

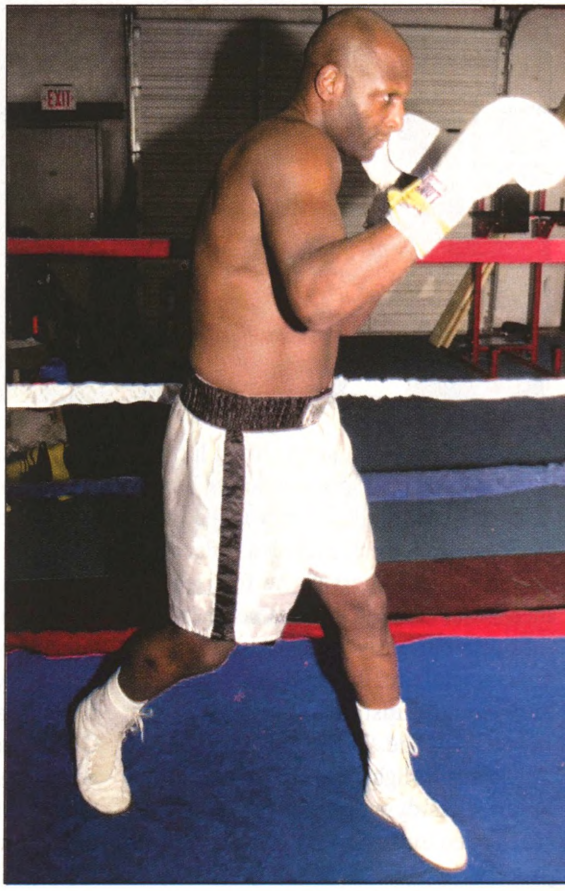
You've watched the world's best fighters and read about them in this magazine, and now you want to give boxing a try, or at least learn a little more about the mechanics of the sport. Welcome to THE RING'S bi-monthly instructional feature on boxing's basics. Bear in mind, the techniques described here are just one of many approaches to the Sweet Science. The most important thing is to find a good coach and follow his instructions. All instructions on these pages are geared for an orthodox, or right-handed, stance. If you are left-handed, merely turn everything around.

Our first two installments provided instruction on the basics of the boxing stance (January '01) and the left jab (March '01). Now it's time to graduate to the premier powerpunch in the sport, the right cross.

For the orthodox fighter, the right hand is the naturally dominant hand and the one that packs the most power. While it may take a long time to develop strength and snap in the left jab because the arm is naturally weaker for a right-hander, you should be able to feel a greater degree of punching power right away when you begin throwing the right cross.

The right cross is more than just a point-scoring punch. When it lands properly on the jaw, it should connect with enough impact to get the opponent's attention, or maybe even send him down for the count. When it lands flush, you should be able to feel the force all the way up to your elbow, a very satisfying feeling that lets you know you've put some hurt on the other guy.

The mechanics of the punch are very simple, but it will require a lot of practice and repetition to develop the kind of timing and coordination needed to utilize the punch with success against better competition.



The right cross starts from the basic stance, with hands high, elbows in, and feet slightly farther apart than your shoulders.

The key word to remember is "cross." First, you need to line up the target so he is more or less in front of your left shoulder before you let go with your haymaker. This forces the right to *cross* your body when you throw it, which brings more body weight—and force—behind the blow. As you throw the punch, remember not to let the hand start moving forward until your right shoulder has *crossed* in front of your left shoulder. If you keep these two *crosses* in mind, you should be able to learn to throw the right cross.

The right cross is only slightly different from the straight right. The straight right does not cross the body and is thrown with the target more directly in front of the right hand. Either punch can be dangerous and effective. Other than where the target is lined up, the technique for throwing either is the same.

The punch begins with the right hand up around the cheekbone. You should extend the hand forward with a loose fist, squeezing

it tighter as it travels in a straight line toward the target until it lands. At that point, the fist should be squeezed tight, so you strike with a solid object that inflicts the most possible damage. The right thumb should be up, pointing toward the ceiling, when the punch begins. As the punch is thrown, it should rotate downward. At impact, the thumb should be pointed slightly toward the ground, at an angle of about 45 degrees or so. The rotation of the fist generates more snap, or power, and causes the opponent's head to jerk back in a whiplash-like fashion.

The right cross is not just an arm punch. The punch should start with your weight distributed slightly onto your right foot. If you take the boxing stance and rock back just a little bit, you will get the idea. The more the weight settles back, the more you are putting behind the punch. Remember, a boxer does not have heels. You should balance yourself on the balls of your feet, which will allow you to rotate more force behind the punch.

The right cross should be thrown with the whole body for maximum effect. The punch begins with the lower body, starting at the hips. The right hip and right shoulder should both snap forward violently. The right hand should not begin to move forward from the cheek area until the right shoulder moves even with the left shoulder and begins to cross in front. This allows your body to generate the power, whipping the arm out as an extension, rather than letting the hand carry the body behind it. This is a subtle art, one that will require a lot of time in the gym to perfect.

While the hip and shoulder rotate forward, you should pivot forward on your right foot. The heel will turn outward, allowing the upper body to gain maximum forward rotation. If your heels are planted to the ground, the hip and shoulder will catch like an anchor and the punch will be halted before it gains full velocity and extension.

The right cross should be thrown with the right elbow tucked tightly to the body, almost close enough to brush the ribs as the punch travels forward. If your elbow flies upward as you throw the punch, you are losing leverage, as well as telegraphing the blow. Raising the elbow allows the arm to give more when the punch lands, which takes away much of its impact and makes it more of an arm punch. This also leaves you wide open to a counter left hook to the body.

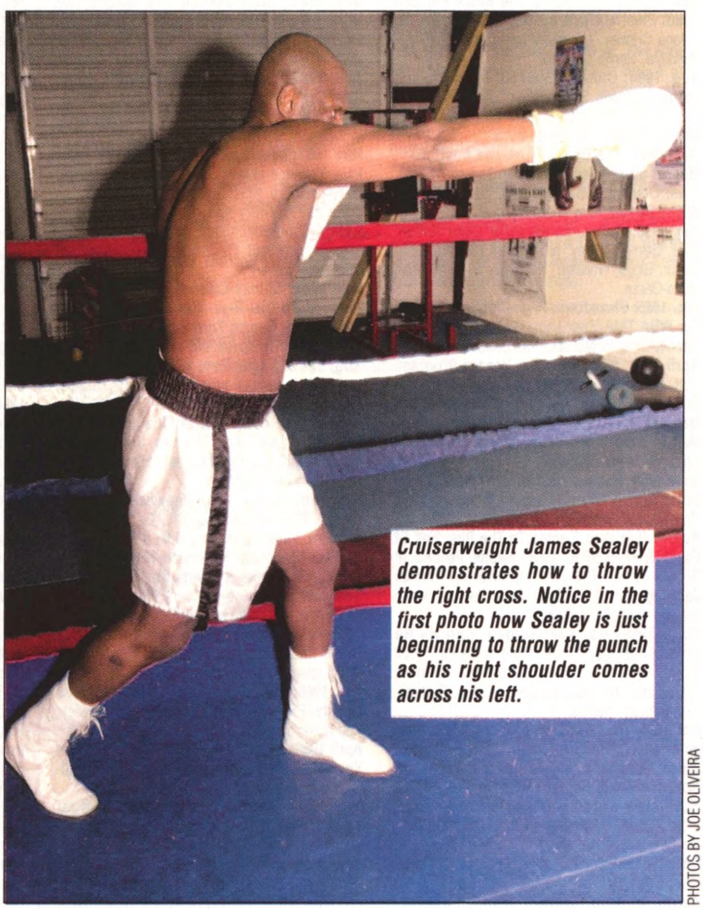
Once the punch lands, you should snap it back rapidly into place along the same path. Jerk your right shoulder and hip back and return the arm into the defensive position in the basic stance. If you allow your right hand to linger too long, you will find yourself an easy target for counterpunches. Don't stop to admire your handiwork or study your opponent's reaction to the punch before you return the hand into position. The quicker it's back, the safer you are. As all-time great trainer Gil Clancy puts it, "Don't wait for the receipt."

As you master the right cross, you should begin to hear a cracking sound when you throw it at a heavybag or punch mitts, rather than a thudding sound. This sound will tell you that you're beginning to get it right.

The most basic mistakes in throwing the right cross are dropping the left hand when you throw the right and allowing the chin to rise up so you can see over the punch. Both, obviously, are dangerous habits that need to be ironed out when shadowboxing in front of the mirror before stepping into the ring for sparring or combat.

July '01 issue: The left hook. ■

Tommy Deas is a sportswriter for The Tuscaloosa [Alabama] News and a trainer of professional and amateur boxers.



Cruiserweight James Sealey demonstrates how to throw the right cross. Notice in the first photo how Sealey is just beginning to throw the punch as his right shoulder comes across his left.

PHOTOS BY JOE OLIVEIRA

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All 10 $37

☐ Jan/86
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☐ Apr/87
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☐ Jan/88
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☐ Jan/91
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☐ Dec/91
All 9 $34

☐ May/92
☐ Jun/92
☐ Jul/92

☐ Aug/92
☐ Sep/92
☐ Oct/92
☐ Nov/92
All 7 $28

☐ Feb/93
☐ Mar/93
☐ Apr/93
☐ May/93
☐ Aug/93
☐ Oct/93
All 6 $25

☐ Apr/94
☐ Aug/94
☐ Oct/94
☐ Nov/94
☐ Dec/94
All 5 $22

☐ Jan/95
☐ May/95
☐ Jun/95
☐ Jul/95
☐ Oct/95
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All 6 $25

☐ Feb/96
☐ May/96

☐ Sep/96
☐ Nov/96
☐ Dec/96
All 5 $22

☐ May/97
☐ Jun/97
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☐ Oct/97
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All 5 $22

☐ Jan/98
☐ Feb/98
☐ Mar/98
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☐ Oct/98
☐ Nov/98
All 11 $40

☐ Jan/99
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☐ Hol/99
All 12 $43

☐ Jan/00
☐ Feb/00
☐ Mar/00
☐ Apr/00
☐ May/00
☐ Jun/00
☐ Jul/00
☐ Aug/00
☐ Sep/00
☐ Oct/00
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All 12 $40

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20 Experts Have Their Say

WILL BARRERA HAND HAMED HIS FIRST DEFEAT?

Hamed, one of the hardest punching featherwights of all-time, slams a left into the bloody face of Manuel Medina. Many observers believe Naz hits too hard for Barrera, who isn't exactly a defensive expert.

Although not a one-shot kayo artist, Barrera, pictured en route to a 12th-round TKO of Kennedy McKinney, is also a heavy hitter, having stopped 38 of 52 pro victims. His best punch is the left hook to the body.

Compiled by Kevin Iole

Naseem Hamed has held some sort of title or another since 1995, but he has yet to have the type of career-defining fight that could stamp him as an all-time great. Everyone who steps into the ring with Hamed speaks of his overwhelming punching power and his quickness, yet his critics are legion. Primarily, that's because the flashy Hamed, 35-0 (31), has managed to be as much style as he is substance to this point. He has feasted on either lower-level competition, fighters who were moving up in weight, or good fighters on the way down. He has heard questions for years about his level of opposition. He won't, however, have to answer those questions after his next fight.

Hamed will be fighting Marco Antonio Barrera, who is moving up from the 122-pound division to challenge him. But this is no pushover who is moving up for a shot at the big money. Barrera, 52-3 (38) with 1 no-contest, is a legitimate world-class fighter who, based on recent performances against Erik Morales and Jesus Salud, appears to be getting better with age.

If Hamed can get past Barrera, most of the questions should end. But there is legitimate doubt whether Hamed can edge the strong-willed Mexican. In a RING EXTRA *poll of 20 boxing insiders, 13 picked Hamed, and seven went with Barrera. Here is a sampling of their opinions:*

JOEL CASAMAYOR (WBA super featherweight champion): "Barrera will win. He's not scared because he's used to fighting the best in the world. I think he'll knock The Prince on his royal ass."

TIM DAHLBERG (Associated Press boxing writer): "Hamed by decision. I was impressed by Barrera's workmanlike performance against Salud, but I don't know if he's ever seen the kind of unorthodox speed he'll get from Hamed. There are a lot of questions about Hamed, but that said, he hasn't lost. I give Barrera an outside shot, but he is moving up, and it's safer to go with the naturally bigger man."

BONES ADAMS (WBA super bantamweight champion): "Hamed. Hamed is too powerful and too awkward for Barrera."

WAYNE McCULLOUGH (former Hamed opponent): "Hamed by TKO. Hamed has too much power. Barrera is a good fighter, but his defense isn't the greatest. The first time Hamed hits you, it sends a shiver up your spine. Guys who can't cope go down. Barrera usually takes punches to get in, and that's a problem fighting Hamed."

PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

Wayne McCullough, who went 12 rounds with Naz in 1998, thinks the hard-hitting Hamed will punish Barrera as the Mexican tries to get inside, resulting in a TKO win for "The Prince."

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

WBA bantamweight champion Paulie Ayala admits Barrera will have problems with Hamed's puzzling style, but believes the Mexican can tally a late-round knockout victory.

PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

Critics have always harped on the quality of Hamed's opponents, but you have to give The Prince credit for giving up his WBO belt in order to fight the dangerous Barrera.

STEVE KIM (Houseofboxing.com columnist): "I'm going to go with the upset and say Barrera by late stoppage or decision. I still have images of Hamed running like a thief in the night against Wayne McCullough—a bantamweight who can't punch—and hitting the canvas against the likes of a Augie Sanchez. Barrera has steadily gotten back to the level of the pre-Junior Jones days. If he tucks his chin in, he'll work the body and walk down The Prince."

JOE GOOSSEN (trainer of Joel Casamayor): "Hamed by TKO. Barrera is a great technician, but Hamed has the size and the power. Though Hamed is short, he's compact and much stronger. Barrera's only chance to win is to hurt Hamed early and finish him. I think Hamed's power will overcome Barrera's boxing skills, and he'll stop him in the later rounds."

DIEGO CORRALES (former IBF junior lightweight champion): "Barrera by TKO. The fight won't go the distance, and I'm leaning toward Barrera. If he can come forward and stay away from Hamed's left, Barrera will stop him."

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

Augie Sanchez, another Naz knockout victim, thinks his conqueror will also knock out Barrera. In fact, Sanchez contends that Hamed will walk right through the Mexican and score a quick blowout.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

After several uninspiring performances, Barrera showed he still had plenty of fight left in him against former world champion Jesus Salud. Barrera looked young again, hammering "The Hawaiian Punch" into a sixth-round knockout defeat.

JACK WELSH (Showtime on-line boxing writer): "Barrera by decision. With Barrera's boxing skills and good power, if he can avoid Hamed's big punch, he can go on to a victory. Hamed's chin remains suspect. Barrera's defense must be good enough to offset the one-shot knockout power of Hamed."

PAT BARRY (trainer of Augie Sanchez and Bones Adams): "I have to go with Hamed. I haven't seen Barrera up close like I have Hamed, but Hamed thoroughly impressed me. He's a powerful man and he has an ability to shake off shots. He has all my respect."

(Continued on page 34)

PHOTO BY GEORGE AZAR

Naz works the pads with trainer Oscar Suarez prior to his devastating fourth-round knockout of Vuyani Bungu last March. Although rumor has it that Hamed doesn't always train as hard as he should, you can be sure he'll be in top shape for Barrera.

Hamed-Barrera

(Continued from page 33)

AUGIE SANCHEZ (Hamed's most recent opponent): "Hamed by kayo. It will be a short fight. I think Hamed is too strong and will walk right through him."

GEORGE FOREMAN (Former heavyweight champion and HBO boxing analyst): "Hamed by kayo. Hamed has something no one else in his weight class has: one-punch knockout power. Even if he is behind, he can and will get Barrera."

KEN ADAMS (trainer of former WBA featherweight champion Fred Norwood): "Hamed by TKO. It's a tough fight, but I think Hamed's speed and power will overcome Barrera. Barrera was very good in his last outing, but he had a guy slightly over the hill in front of him. The Prince has the speed and the power to stop him in the late rounds. Barrera has been in quite a few wars and doesn't get knocked down, but The Prince has serious power."

PAULIE AYALA (WBA bantamweight champion): "Barrera by knockout. Barrera looked good against Salud, and I think he'll give Hamed a lot of trouble. I see The Prince moving a lot and, when Barrera gets close, trying to tie him up. Barrera has a lot of boxing skills, though. I have a feeling he'll stop Hamed as the fight goes on."

MIGUEL DIAZ (1999 RING Trainer of the Year): "Barrera by knockout. But that's only if the politics are equal. Hamed's management team is very influential. But if all is on the level, I think Barrera will stop him. He has a good chin, which he showed against Morales, and he is technically very good."

ERIC BOTTJER (Matchmaker for Cedric Kushner Promotions): "I like Barrera, and not just because he looked good against Jesus Salud. Hamed has the kind of style that hypnotizes most of his opponents and distracts them. Barrera is a very willful guy and isn't going to pay any attention to that stuff. He's going to glue himself to Hamed's chest and keep pounding away, and Naz isn't going to be able to cope with that kind of pressure for 12 rounds. I like Barrera by decision or late TKO."

DONALD TREMBLAY (publicist for Main Events): "I think Barrera has the style to beat Hamed, but I can't quite pick against Hamed. As unorthodox as he is, as flawed as he is technically, his hand speed and his power are probably going to mean the difference. Hamed will go out of his way to avoid getting hit more than he has to, and he'll win by decision."

EDDIE FUTCH (Hall of Fame trainer): "Hamed by kayo. Hamed has a lot of crazy moves, but the guy can really punch. I'm afraid he'll really nail Barrera a good one. Barrera will be coming and coming, and out of nowhere, one of those bombs will land. Barrera takes a good shot, but sooner or later, it will take its toll."

RON BORGES (*Boston Globe* boxing writer): "Hamed by knockout somewhere between the sixth and eighth rounds. Although Barrera put on that great war with Morales and surprised me by dominating his last fight, he lacks the speed to stay with Hamed. Both Hamed's hand and foot speed should prove to be too much for Barrera, especially if he opens up. If he doesn't, it's a slow beating. If he does, it's a fast one, unless Hamed walks into one, which he's well capable of."

ED SCHUYLER (Associated Press boxing writer): "I think Barrera knows more about boxing than Hamed will ever know. But Hamed is too strong, and he hits too hard. He's the kind of fighter who can make all kinds of mistakes, then erase them with one punch. Hamed via kayo."

HANK KAPLAN (boxing historian): "I think Hamed is going to have a difficult time with Barrera, but will win out in the end because of his punching power. Hamed has all those ridiculous moves that shouldn't work, but they do. He also generates great punching leverage with those moves. I see Hamed winning by a late knockout." ■

Kevin Iole covers boxing for the Las Vegas Review-Journal and is a regular contributor to this magazine.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/DIRECTV

A bloody Barrera slugs it out with Erik Morales in the most famous fight of his career. Although the undefeated Hamed has come off the floor to win several times, he's never been involved in a prolonged give-and-take war like Morales-Barrera.

Year-End Spectacular!

THE BEST OF 2000

Compiled by Nigel Collins, Eric Raskin, & Joe Santoliquito

Welcome to the biggest and most comprehensive year-end awards issue in the 79-year history of THE RING, a sensational 30-page special section devoted to the very best boxing had to offer in the year 2000.

Regular readers will notice a progressive departure from our usual format, which, in recent years, has been limited to a feature story about the Fighter of the Year and a mention of Fight, Round, Knockout, and Upset of the Year in the editor-in-chief's "Ringside" column. This year we're taking full advantage of the additional space now available in THE RING EXTRA to give highlights of the past year a far more comprehensive treatment. But that's not all.

For reasons of continuity and in order to make the year-end awards as extensive as possible, we have also moved some of the awards heretofore carried in our sister publication *KO* to THE RING. These include: Comeback and Event of the Year, the irreverent "Highly Unofficial Awards," and "The Best Fighter Poll," a survey of experts' pound-for-pound preferences. Another *KO* tradition being transferred as part of the new package is the annual "Who Will Stay And Who Will Go?" feature in which we attempt to predict five titlists who will still be wearing the same belts at the end of 2001 and five who won't.

Also included are lists of all the past winners in every category in order to give readers a historical perspective. The Fighter of the Year award has the longest history, dating back to 1928. Others, such as Event of the Year, which debuted in '93, are relatively new. Together, they represent virtually every facet of the Sweet Science.

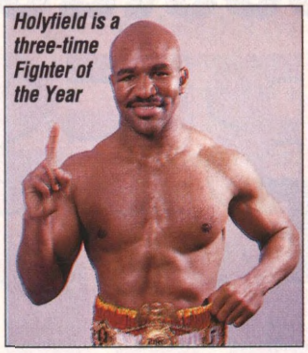
Unfortunately, the IBF trial and the Mike Tyson circus garnered most of the headlines in 2000. And that was a shame, because from a standpoint of what took place between the ropes, the past year was indeed an outstanding one. As always, there were some disappointments, but many of the fights that fans were eager to see were made, and most of them resulted in action-packed fights. We also saw a changing of the guard at the top of the P-4-P list, the emergence of new stars, and the demise of others, all of which are fully documented in this special section.

This issue also marks the first time in the history of THE RING that all the highlights of the previous year will be presented in full color, making it a valuable collectors' edition that will preserve the memories of 2000 for years to come.

PAST WINNERS

FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

1928: Gene Tunney
1929: Tommy Loughran
1930: Max Schmeling
1931: Tommy Loughran
1932: Jack Sharkey
1933: No Award
1934: Tony Canzoneri/Barney Ross
1935: Barney Ross
1936: Joe Louis
1937: Henry Armstrong
1938: Joe Louis
1939: Joe Louis
1940: Billy Conn
1941: Joe Louis
1942: Ray Robinson
1943: Fred Apostoli
1944: Beau Jack
1945: Willie Pep
1946: Tony Zale
1947: Gus Lesnevich
1948: Ike Williams
1949: Ezzard Charles
1950: Ezzard Charles
1951: Ray Robinson
1952: Rocky Marciano
1953: Bobo Olson
1954: Rocky Marciano
1955: Rocky Marciano
1956: Floyd Patterson
1957: Carmen Basilio
1958: Ingemar Johansson
1959: Ingemar Johansson
1960: Floyd Patterson
1961: Joe Brown
1962: Dick Tiger
1963: Cassius Clay
1964: Emile Griffith
1965: Dick Tiger
1966: No Award
1967: Joe Frazier
1968: Nino Benvenuti
1969: Jose Napoles
1970: Joe Frazier
1971: Joe Frazier
1972: Muhammad Ali/Carlos Monzon
1973: George Foreman
1974: Muhammad Ali


Holyfield is a three-time Fighter of the Year

1975: Muhammad Ali
1976: George Foreman
1977: Carlos Zarate
1978: Muhammad Ali
1979: Ray Leonard
1980: Thomas Hearns
1981: Ray Leonard/Salvador Sanchez
1982: Larry Holmes
1983: Marvin Hagler
1984: Thomas Hearns
1985: Marvin Hagler/Donald Curry
1986: Mike Tyson
1987: Evander Holyfield
1988: Mike Tyson
1989: Pernell Whitaker
1990: Julio Cesar Chavez
1991: James Toney
1992: Riddick Bowe
1993: Michael Carbajal
1994: Roy Jones
1995: Oscar De La Hoya
1996: Evander Holyfield
1997: Evander Holyfield
1998: Floyd Mayweather
1999: Paulie Ayala
2000: Felix Trinidad

FIGHT OF THE YEAR

1945: Rocky Graziano KO 10 Freddie Cochrane
1946: Tony Zale KO 6 Rocky Graziano
1947: Rocky Graziano KO 6 Tony Zale
1948: Marcel Cerdan KO 12 Tony Zale
1949: Willie Pep W 15 Sandy Saddler
1950: Jake LaMotta KO 15 Laurent Dauthuille
1951: Jersey Joe Walcott KO 7 Ezzard Charles
1952: Rocky Marciano KO 13 Jersey Joe Walcott
1953: Rocky Marciano KO 11 Roland LaStarza
1954: Rocky Marciano KO 8 Ezzard Charles
1955: Carmen Basilio KO 12 Tony DeMarco
1956: Carmen Basilio KO 9 Johnny Saxton
1957: Carmen Basilio W 15 Ray Robinson
1958: Ray Robinson W 15 Carmen Basilio
1959: Gene Fullmer KO 14 Carmen Basilio
1960: Floyd Patterson KO 5 Ingemar Johansson
1961: Joe Brown W 15 Dave Charnley
1962: Joey Giardello W 10 Henry Hank
1963: Cassius Clay W 10 Doug Jones
1964: Cassius Clay KO 7 Sonny Liston
1965: Floyd Patterson W 12 George Chuvalo
1966: Jose Torres W 15 Eddie Cotton
1967: Nino Benvenuti W 15 Emile Griffith
1968: Dick Tiger W 10 Frank DePaula
1969: Joe Frazier KO 7 Jerry Quarry
1970: Carlos Monzon KO 12 Nino Benvenuti
1971: Joe Frazier W 15 Muhammad Ali
1972: Bob Foster KO 14 Chris Finnegan
1973: George Foreman KO 2 Joe Frazier
1974: Muhammad Ali KO 8 George Foreman
1975: Muhammad Ali KO 14 Joe Frazier
1976: George Foreman KO 5 Ron Lyle
1977: Jimmy Young W 12 George Foreman
1978: Leon Spinks W 15 Muhammad Ali
1979: Danny Lopez KO 15 Mike Ayala
1980: Matthew Saad Muhammad KO 14 Yaqui Lopez
1981: Sugar Ray Leonard KO 14 Thomas Hearns
1982: Bobby Chacon W 15 Bazooka Limon
1983: Bobby Chacon W 12 Cornelius Boza-Edwards
1984: Jose Luis Ramirez KO 4 Edwin Rosario
1985: Marvin Hagler KO 3 Thomas Hearns
1986: Steve Cruz W 15 Barry McGuigan
1987: Sugar Ray Leonard W 12 Marvin Hagler
1988: Tony Lopez W 12 Rocky Lockridge
1989: Roberto Duran W 12 Iran Barkley
1990: Julio Cesar Chavez KO 12 Meldrick Taylor
1991: Robert Quiroga W 12 Akeem Anifowoshe
1992: Riddick Bowe W 12 Evander Holyfield
1993: Michael Carbajal KO 7 Chiquita Gonzalez
1994: Jorge Castro KO 9 John David Jackson
1995: Saman Sorjaturong KO 7 Chiquita Gonzalez
1996: Evander Holyfield KO 11 Mike Tyson
1997: Arturo Gatti KO 5 Gabriel Ruelas
1998: Ivan Robinson W 10 Arturo Gatti
1999: Paulie Ayala W 12 Johnny Tapia
2000: Erik Morales W 12 Marco Antonio Barrera

Clay stuns Liston in '64's Fight of the Year

Marciano blasts Walcott in '52's Round of the Year

ROUND OF THE YEAR

1945: Joyce-Williams, 12
1946: Zale-Graziano, 6
1947: Louis-Walcott, 4
1948: Louis-Walcott, 11
1949: Graziano-Fusari, 10
1950: LaMotta-Dauthuille, 15
1951: Marciano-Louis, 8
1952: Marciano-Walcott, 13
1953: Gavilan-Basilio, 2
1954: Moore-Johnson, 14
1955: Moore-Olson, 3
1956: Robinson-Olson, 4
1957: Robinson-Fullmer, 5
1958: Johansson-Machen, 1
1959: Johansson-Patterson, 3
1960: Patterson-Johansson, 5
1961: Patterson-Johansson, 1
1962: Liston-Patterson, 1
1963: Liston-Patterson, 1
1964: Torres-Olson, 1
1965: Torres-Pastrano, 6
1966: Ortiz-Ramos, 5
1967: Tiger-Rouse, 12
1968: Foster-Tiger, 4
1969: Benvenuti-Rodriguez, 11
1970: Ali-Bonavena, 15
1971: Frazier-Ali, 15
1972: Ali-Foster, 5
1973: Foreman-Frazier, 2
1974: Ali-Foreman, 8
1975: Ali-Frazier, 12
1976: Foreman-Lyle, 4 & 5
1977: Young-Foreman, 12
1978: Spinks-Ali, 15
1979: Franklin-Johnson, 8
1980: Saad Muhammad-Lopez, 8
1981: Lee-LoCicero, 5
1982: Gomez-Pintor, 3
1983: Holmes-Witherspoon, 9
1984: Meza-Garza, 1
1985: Hagler-Hearns, 1
1986: Cruz-McGuigan, 15
1987: Seabrooks-Jacob, 1
1988: Tyson-Spinks, 1
1989: Gutierrez-Franklin, 12
1990: Davis-Breland, 9
1991: No Award
1992: Bowe-Holyfield, 10
1993: Norris-Waters, 2
1994: Castro-Jackson, 9
1995: Sorjaturong-Gonzalez, 7
1996: Liles-Littles, 3
1997: Gatti-Ruelas, 5
1998: Robinson-Gatti II, 3
1999: De La Hoya-Quartey, 6
2000: Morales-Barrera, 5

KNOCKOUT OF THE YEAR

1989: Michael Nunn KO 1 Sumbu Kalambay
1990: Terry Norris KO 1 John Mugabi
1991: No Award
1992: Kennedy McKinney KO 11 Welcome Ncita
Morris East KO 11 Akinobu Hiranaka
1993: Gerald McClellan KO 5 Julian Jackson
1994: George Foreman KO 10 Michael Moorer
1995: Julio Cesar Vasquez KO 11 Carl Daniels
1996: Wilfredo Vasquez KO 11 Eloy Rojas
1997: Arturo Gatti KO 5 Gabriel Ruelas
1998: Roy Jones KO 4 Virgil Hill
1999: Derrick Jefferson KO 6 Maurice Harris
2000: Ben Tackie KO 10 Roberto Garcia

UPSET OF THE YEAR

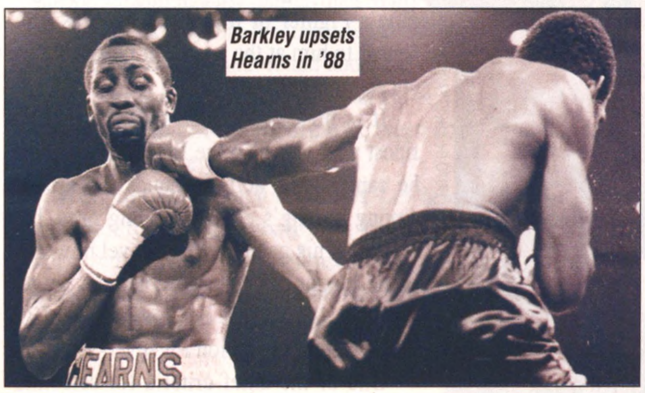
1980: Yasutsune Uehara KO 6 Sammy Serrano
1981: Roger Stafford W 10 Pipino Cuevas
1982: Kirkland Laing W 10 Roberto Duran
1983: Gerrie Coetzee KO 10 Michael Dokes
1984: Gene Hatcher KO 11 Johnny Bumphus
1985: Michael Spinks W 15 Larry Holmes
1986: Lloyd Honeyghan KO 6 Donald Curry
1987: Sugar Ray Leonard W 12 Marvin Hagler
1988: Iran Barkley KO 3 Thomas Hearns
1989: Rene Jacquot W 12 Donald Curry
1990: Buster Douglas KO 10 Mike Tyson
1991: No Award
1992: Azumah Nelson KO 8 Jeff Fenech
1993: Simon Brown KO 4 Terry Norris
1994: Vuyani Bungu W 12 Kennedy McKinney
1995: Willy Salazar KO 7 Danny Romero
1996: Evander Holyfield KO 11 Mike Tyson
1997: Vince Phillips KO 10 Kostya Tszyu
1998: Ivan Robinson W 10 Arturo Gatti
1999: Willy Wise W 10 Julio Cesar Chavez
2000: Jose Luis Castillo W 12 Steve Johnston

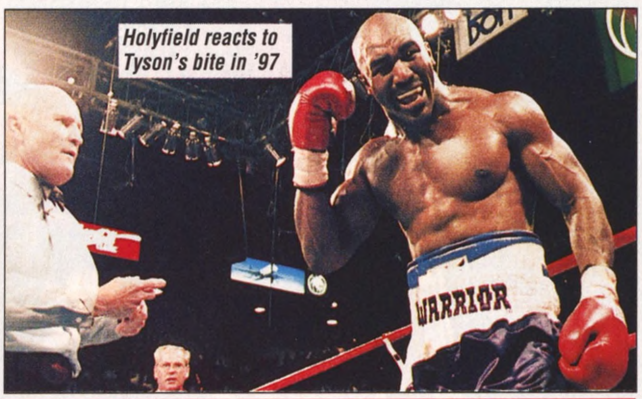
COMEBACK OF THE YEAR

1980: Shoji Oguma
1981: Jimmy Young
1982: Bobby Chacon
1983: Roberto Duran
1984: Marvin Johnson
1985: Lupe Pintor
1986: Edwin Rosario
1987: Frankie Duarte
1988: Michael Dokes
1989: Roberto Duran
1990: Tony Lopez
1991: Vinny Pazienza
1992: Iran Barkley
1993: Zack Padilla
1994: George Foreman
1995: Azumah Nelson
1996: Danny Romero
1997: Vince Phillips
1998: Kostya Tszyu
1999: Michael Carbajal
2000: Virgil Hill

EVENT OF THE YEAR

1993: Fan Man at Holyfield-Bowe
1994: Revenge: The Rematches
1995: Tyson returns
1996: Riot at The Garden
1997: The bite
1998: Tyson's reinstatement
1999: The IBF indictments
2000: Mosley vs. De La Hoya





FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

FELIX TRINIDAD

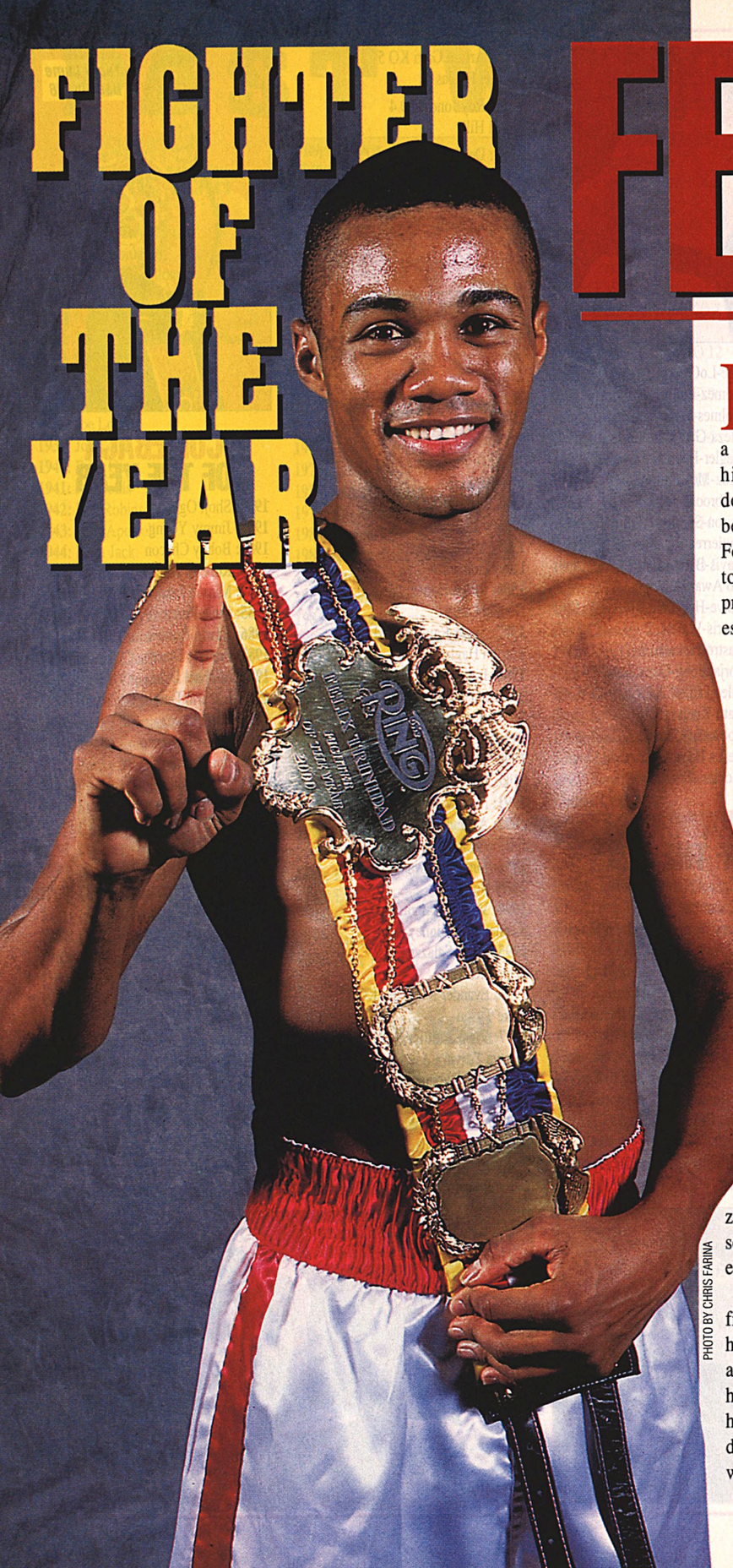


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

His lips were puffy, the right side of his face swollen and distorted, his bloodshot eyes hidden behind a pair of sunglasses. But when he bowed his head and the tears came spilling down his face, they were tears of joy, because regardless of how he looked, Felix Trinidad had just triumphed in the toughest fight of his career, and in the process, won the Sweet Science's highest honor.

When you consider that he's been an undefeated champion since 1993 and all the outstanding fighters he's beaten, it's somewhat surprising that Trinidad has never been Fighter of the Year before. Some fans thought he deserved the award in 1999, when he beat Pernell Whitaker and Oscar De La Hoya, but the fact that Whitaker was at the end of his career and the controversial nature of the De La Hoya decision took some luster off the victories, and the prize went to Paulie Ayala.

This year, however, there was no doubt whatsoever. Moments after referee Jay Nady raised Trinidad's arm following his breathtaking victory over Fernando Vargas, THE RING editors huddled and promptly agreed that 2000 belonged to "Tito," and the magazine's Fighter of the Year belt was presented to him at the postfight press conference.

It is no coincidence that Trinidad's finest year was also the first year in which he campaigned at 154 pounds. He's been among boxing's elite for a long time, but has taken his game to a new level now that he no longer has to torture his body to get down to 147, where he'd reigned as IBF welterweight champion for seven years.

One of the chief criteria for selecting the Fighter of the Year is emphatic victories over top-notch competition. In today's game, when the best fighters fight each other infrequently, a single win over a top-of-the-line opponent is notable. But when, as was the case with Trinidad in '00, a fighter beats two stellar opponents during a 12-month period, it's a rarity. Trinidad did just that in '00 with wins over Vargas and David Reid, a pair of adversaries many insiders picked to beat him. In between these two superbouts, Tito brutally turned back mandatory challenger Mamadou Thiam, who, while not in Vargas and Reid's league, was a brave and worthy challenger who came into the bout riding a lengthy winning streak.

Although a fighter doesn't have to be a choirboy to be selected as Fighter of the Year, it's definitely a bonus having a class act such as Trinidad representing the sport. There's never been a whisper of scandal associated with Trinidad, who enjoys god-like status in his native Puerto Rico. The only thing that has held him back from a marketing point of view is that he doesn't speak English. But, as so many have discovered, Tito's fists speak a truly international language.

If there was one moment during the past year that epitomized Trinidad's indomitable will to win, it came in sixth round of the Vargas fight. After almost putting "Ferocious Fernando" away in the first and building an early lead, Tito was knocked down in the fourth and thoroughly outboxed

HONORABLE MENTION

There were three other fighters under consideration for top honors, and all three had a strong case.

First, there was **Shane Mosley**, who shocked the boxing world by beating Oscar De La Hoya in June. Unlike Trinidad, who took a questionable decision from "The Golden Boy," Mosley's 12-round decision over De La Hoya was clear-cut, and the exciting victory catapulted Sugar Shane to the number-one spot in THE RING's pound-for-pound ratings.

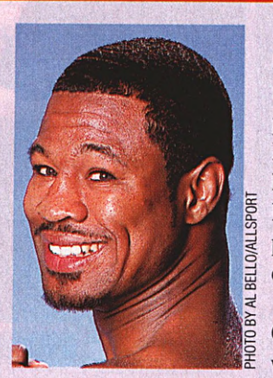


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

Mosley: Won second world title in 2000

Mosley had taken a calculated risk in 1999, giving up the IBF lightweight belt after eight successful defenses, skipping the 140-pound class, and diving right into the deep end of the talent-rich 147-pound pool. He opened '00 with a quickie tuneup against journeyman Willy Wise (KO 3) and then tackled De La Hoya. In his first defense of the WBC welter crown, he tallied a sizzling sixth-round knockout of capable Antonio Diaz to cap a year he'll never forget. Had either Wise or Diaz been of higher quality, the competition between Mosley and Trinidad would have been even tighter.

Heavyweight champion **Lennox Lewis** also had an excellent year, reinforcing his position as the best heavyweight in the world with a trio of title defenses. A lot of folks thought undefeated American Michael Grant had the size and power to topple Lewis. But when "The Norristown Nice Guy" tried in April, Lewis treated him like a raw novice and ruthlessly dispatched him inside of two rounds. Frans Botha fared no better in July, and was sent packing by a brilliant three-punch combination that put him down and partway through the ropes in the second. Finally, in November, there was David Tua, the Samoan left hook artist many experts considered capable of beating the big Brit. He never came close, and was instead the recipient of a painful boxing lesson, as Lewis jabbed his way to a lopsided decision.

We got a hint of just how exceptional of a fighter **Diego Corrales** could be in '99, when he ripped the IBF junior lightweight title away from Roberto Garcia with a dramatic knockout. But it was in '00 that Corrales verified our suspicion of potential greatness. In March, he smoked future WBA featherweight champ Derrick Gainer in three rounds. In June, he outslugged gallant Justin Juuko for a grueling 10th-round TKO, and in September handed Angel Manfredy the most definitive defeat of his career, blowing away the perennial contender in the third round. Unfortunately, a possibly career-interrupting domestic violence case hangs over Corrales' head. But if he can clean up his legal problems and stay out of further trouble, "Chico" has the talent to win this category in the near future.

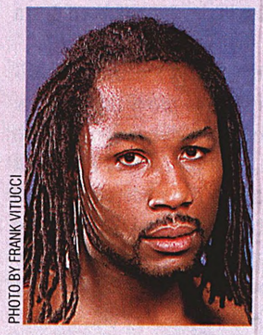


PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

Lewis: Three title defenses in 12 months

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

It's all over. Referee Jay Nady signals the end of the fight following Vargas' fifth trip to the canvas. Trinidad put "El Feroz" down twice in the first and three more times in the 12th.

in the fifth. But just when it looked like the fight was slipping away, he redoubled his effort. You've heard fighters talk about refusing to lose. Well, that's exactly what Trinidad appeared to do, digging deeper inside of himself than ever before to regain control of the fight that he later admitted was the toughest of his career.

The 12th round was also pure Tito. Although Vargas had won the 11th on all three official scorecards, Trinidad was far enough ahead that he could have coasted home to victory by merely staying on his feet the last three minutes. But that's not his style. He wanted a knockout and went all out to get it, and when he succeeded, it put a vivid exclamation point on the fight *and* the year, a 12-month span in which Trinidad shined his brightest.

Trinidad's 39-0 (32) record is remarkable in and of itself, especially when you

FELIX TRINIDAD: YHE YEAR THAT WAS

For a number of years during the mid- and late-1990s, it seemed that Trinidad was squandering his imposing talent by fighting a series of minor opponents in matches that nobody cared about. Such nondescript no-hopers as Ray Lovato, Kevin Lueshing, Troy Waters, and Mahenge Zulu were easy meat for "Tito," but did absolutely nothing to improve his standing among boxing's elite. That all changed in '99, however, when he beat Whitaker and De La Hoya, which perfectly positioned him for the trio of bouts in '00 that have rocketed his status into the stratosphere. In boxing, all a fighter has to do in order to prove that he's the best is beat the best, and that's exactly what Trinidad did in 2000.

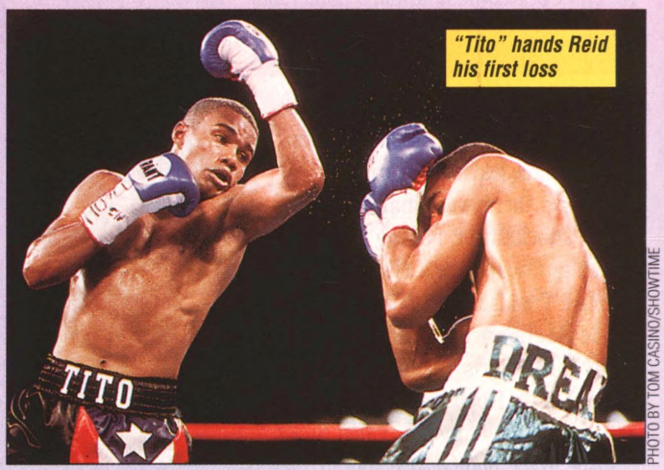


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

W 12 David Reid, Las Vegas, Nevada, March 3, 2000: As inconceivable as it is to imagine in retrospect, 26 of the 51 boxing writers polled prior the fight picked Reid to win (23 selected Trinidad, while two predicted a draw). The thinking was that Reid's speed and skills would enable the 1996 Olympic gold medalist to outbox Trinidad, and that "The American Dream's" thunderous right hand might even stop Tito, who had been down four times in previous title fights.

Those who touted Reid pointed to Trinidad's debatable decision over De La Hoya the previous year as proof that a quick boxer could outmaneuver the supposedly one-dimensional Puerto Rican. And for the first half of the fight at Caesars Palace, it looked as if the know-it-alls were right. The undefeated Reid, competing in only his 15th pro fight, out-slicked Trinidad the first couple of rounds and then dropped him with a right to the jaw in the third. At the end of six rounds, the Philadelphian was leading 57-55 on all three official scorecards.

But in the seventh, Trinidad, exhibiting more power and pizzazz at 154 pounds than he had the last several years at 147, floored Reid with a wicked left hook. The defending WBA super welterweight champion beat the count and survived the round, but never threatened again. Trinidad scored three more knockdowns in the 11th, and even though the dead-game Reid kept getting up and somehow managed to last the distance, the unanimous decision in Trinidad's favor was a formality. Afterward, those who had picked against him could only shake their heads in newfound admiration.

KO 3 Mamadou Thiam, Miami, Florida, July 22, 2000: Thiam, a native of Senegal based in France, was Trinidad's mandatory challenger for the WBA belt, which usually means the guy barely knows how to hold his hands up. But as far as alphabet mandatories go, Thiam was reasonably deserving. He entered the bout with a 33-1 (30) record, and put up spirited resistance for as long as he lasted.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

An emotional Trinidad receives THE RING's Fighter of the Year belt from managing editor Eric Raskin at the press conference following the Vargas fight.

look at the names of the guys he's beaten. But when you factor in his 19-0 (15) tally in world title bouts, you realize just how special Trinidad really is, and at 28, he still has a number of good years ahead of him.

Since THE RING began selecting Fighter of the Year in 1928, there have been eight fighters who have won the honor in back-to-back years *(see page 36)*, and with the ambitious itinerary he's sketched out for 2001, Trinidad just might become number nine. Now that he wears both the WBA and IBF versions of the 154-pound title, Tito plans to invade the middleweight division, starting with WBA boss William Joppy in April. If he's successful, bouts with IBF titlist Bernard Hopkins and maybe even Roy Jones are being seriously considered. Beat that trio, and Trinidad will be right back on top of the pile again next year. ■

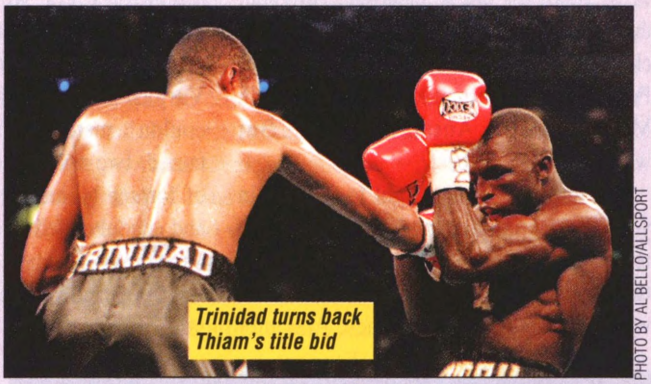
With a packed and adoring house at the American Airlines Arena cheering him on, Trinidad found Thiam a brave and willing foil. The short, muscular challenger attack from the opening bell, wading into Trinidad, winging hard shots with both hands. Tito welcomed his advance with an awesome barrage of lefts, starting with range-finding jabs and quickly escalating to punishing hooks and uppercuts. Thiam stumbled, righted himself, and finished the round with a right eye that was already half closed.

Undeterred, Thiam rushed to the attack again in the second. He landed a good left hook and a flush right to have Trinidad under serious pressure, but the champion rode out his challenger's flurry and roared back to leave Thiam dangling on the ropes at the bell.

Thiam never stopped trying to overcome the odds, but his eye grew progressively worse with every punch Trinidad landed in the third round, and after a final uppercut from Tito caused him to turn away, referee Jorge Alonso stopped the fight at the 2:48 mark.

KO 12 Fernando Vargas, Las Vegas, Nevada, December 2, 2000: Will we never learn? Again, there were a significant number of well-informed insiders and media members who picked IBF titlist Vargas to beat Trinidad in their unification match at Mandalay Bay. And going in, it wasn't too much of a stretch. The undefeated Vargas was obviously a major talent, but he'd never faced anybody like Trinidad before—and never sampled a left hook as hard as the one that dumped him 20 seconds into the bout.

Like Trinidad has done so many times in the past, Vargas pulled himself up and threw himself back into the fray. Moments later, he was down again after another hook clipped the point of his chin. But as Vargas likes to remind us, he comes from Aztec warrior stock and wasn't about to fold without a fight. He sucked



Trinidad turns back Thiam's title bid

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

it up and survived the first and several other shaky rounds before finally getting untracked in the fourth.

Those who live by the hook also frequently die by it, and Vargas unloaded one of his own on Trinidad's chin in the fourth, which put Tito on the canvas. But when Vargas moved in to finish the job following referee Jay Nady's eight-count, he was greeted by a low blow that cost Trinidad a point, but might have saved the fight.

Vargas had another excellent round in the fifth, but just when it seemed that he might take over, Trinidad threw his attack into overdrive and regained control. There was a breathtaking give-and-take exchange in the ninth in which both men traded bombs in the center of the ring, but from then on, Trinidad, who runs marathons in his spare time, grew stronger, while Vargas gradually weakened.

Vargas had one last rally at the close of the 11th, but was utterly overwhelmed in the final round when Trinidad floored him three more times. Tito's trademark left hook accounted for the first two knockdowns, and a booming right the last. The final time Vargas crashed down, Nady didn't even bother to count, immediately calling a halt 1:33 into the round.

FIGHT OF THE YEAR

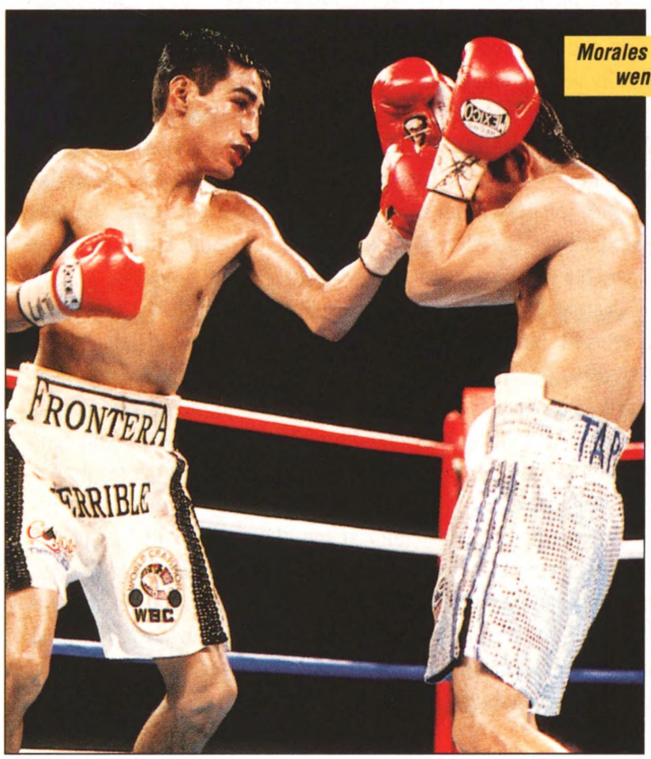
ERIK MORALES W 12
MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA

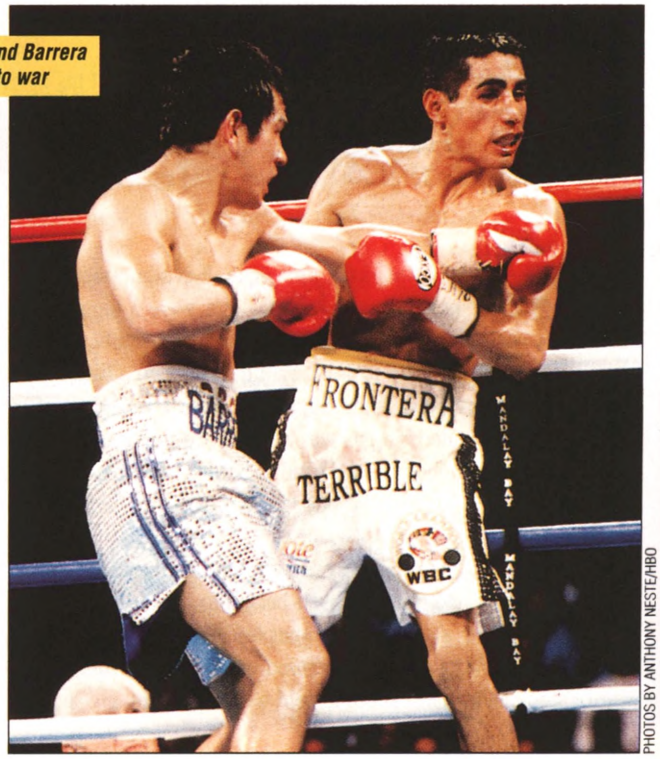
Some years the winner in this category is obvious. In others, such as 2000, it's not so clear-cut. Although there were numerous noteworthy fights to choose from, two among them stood out: Felix Trinidad-Fernando Vargas and Erik Morales-Marco Antonio Barrera. But which one was the best?

As the more recent fight is freshest in your mind, and knowing how the memory tends to play tricks, the editors decided that the only fair way to decide was to watch both fights, back-to-back. And after several hours in front of the TV set reviewing tapes, the unanimous choice was Morales-Barrera, which took place at the Mandalay Bay Event Center on February 19. While there's no doubt that Trinidad-Vargas was a fantastic fight, it simply couldn't match Morales-Barrera for sustained, two-way action, dramatic changes of fortune (sometimes several per round), and unadulterated ferocity.

Morales, 23, held the WBC super bantamweight champion going in, but it was pride, not a belt, that motivated this pair of diminutive Mexican dynamos to fight with such unforgettable passion.

They got right down to business in the opening round, promptly establishing a sizzling pace that would continue right up until the final bell. The 26-year-old Barrera began to find a home for his vaunted left hook almost immediately, repeatedly driving it into his rival's head and body. Morales responded with jabs and straight rights, as they took turns dishing out copious amounts of punishment. Many of the rounds were close, but Barrera displayed





Morales and Barrera went to war

PHOTOS BY ANTHONY NESTE/HBO

quicker hands than expected, and forged an early lead.

The fifth round was a riveting three minutes of undiluted mayhem, featuring extreme displays of brutality and bravery. Punches that would have finished virtually any other 122-pounder crashed home, but neither man went down. Morales rocked Barrera with sizzling rights, only to have his adversary blaze back near the end of the round to rattle him with a wicked combination along the ropes. It was a pattern that would be repeated in several rounds: Morales would get out in front, only to be shaken by a late rally from Barrera. It was amazing to watch as they went back and forth, round after round, locked in a struggle that both refused to lose.

A Morales right hand opened a cut under Barrera's right eye in the ninth, and by the time they entered the final round, both men's faces were a mass of welts and bruises. When Morales slipped and fell, referee Mitch Halpern mistakenly ruled that it was a knockdown. But the two-point spread Barrera received in the 12th was not enough, as Morales won a controversial split decision by scores of 115-112 (Dalby Shirley), 114-113 (Carol Castellano), and 113-114 (Duane Ford).

But rather than focus on the unpopular decision, let us instead heap praise upon the two men who fought their hearts out for $200,000 apiece and Mexican bragging rights. They landed a total of 618 punches between them (319 for Morales; 299 for Barrera) in a truly epic encounter that was 2000's Fight of the Year. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

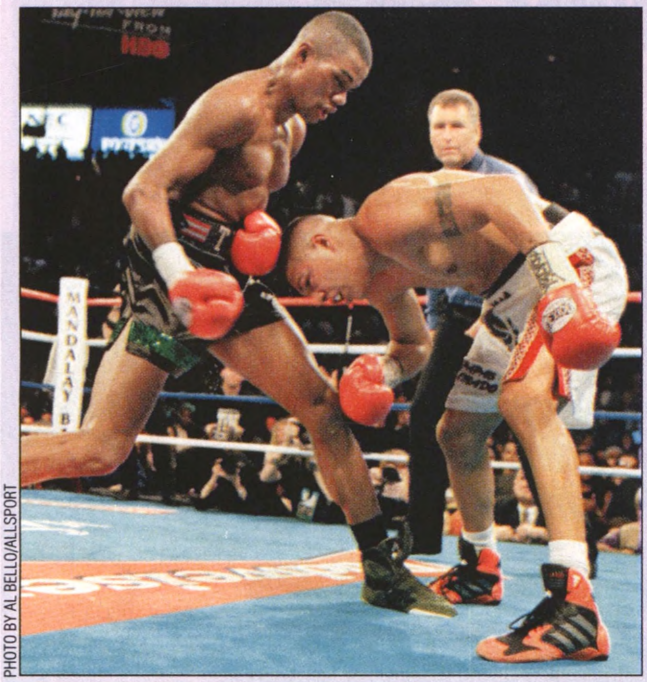


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

Trinidad has Vargas ducking for cover

They scored six knockdowns between them, five by **Felix Trinidad** and one by **Fernando Vargas**, and in between trips to the canvas, they went at each other with a mesmerizing blend of skill and savagery. What, at first, looked like an early blowout for Trinidad, had, by the middle rounds, turned into a compelling conflict. But down the stretch, "Tito's" experience and punching power proved too much for Vargas. And when referee Jay Nady rescued "El Feroz" at the 1:33 mark of the 12th round, Trinidad had added the IBF 154-pound belt to the WBA version he wore into the ring and tallied the most impressive victory of his career. Earlier in the year, Trinidad came off the deck to decision **David Reid**, and Vargas had outpointed **Ike Quartey** in two other superb bouts.

In another hotly contested and highly significant battle, **Shane Mosley** won the WBC welterweight title and elevated himself to superstar status by decisioning **Oscar De La Hoya** at Los Angeles' Staples Center. De La Hoya, criticized for running the last three rounds of his '99 fight with Trinidad, fought aggressively from the first bell to the last. But "The Golden Boy" couldn't keep up with the quick-fisted Sugar Shane, who overcame a slow start to cap a career-making performance with a blazing final-round assault.

In a war between two guys who don't know how to take a backward step, **Tony Ayala Jr.'s** remarkable comeback was halted by former IBF junior middleweight champ **Yory Boy Campas**, who forced Ayala to quit on his stool at the end of eight rounds of merciless two-way slugging.

The unbeaten streak of junior welterweight knockout artist **Randall Bailey** came to an abrupt halt at the hands of unheralded **Ener Julio**, who won an electrifying 12-round decision in a bout that saw both men on the floor and repeatedly staggered.

In outstanding overseas action, England's **Michael Ayers** stopped **Wayne Rigby** in the 10th round of a stirring struggle that moved *Boxing News* editor Claude Abrams to write, "In 14 years of watching boxing from ringside, I had never seen anything like it." And in what Japanese correspondent Joe Koizumi called "definitely the Fight of the Year in this part of the world," WBA lightweight champion **Takanori Hatakeyama** punched his way to a 10th-round knockout of hard-hooking **Hiroyuki Sakamoto**.

Sugar Shane was too sweet for De La Hoya

ROUND OF THE YEAR

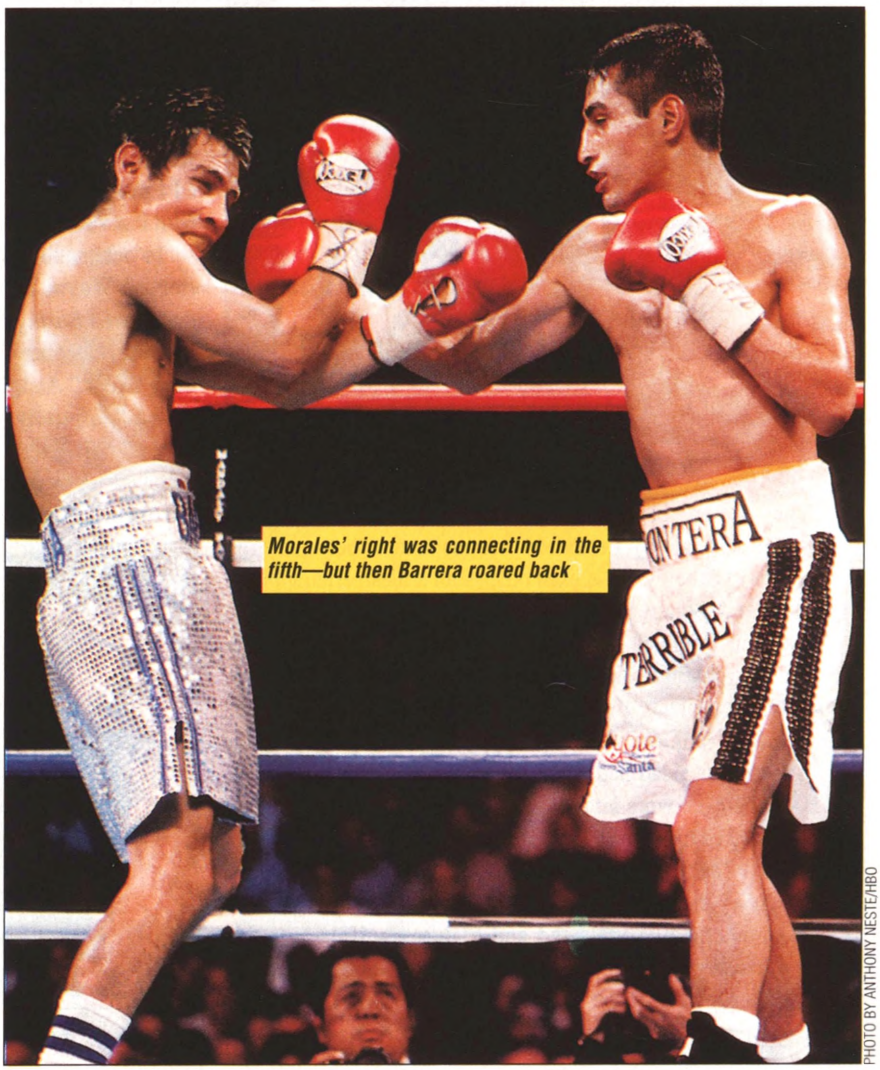
ERIK MORALES vs. MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA

ROUND 5

The feeling after viewing the entire 12 rounds of the titanic Erik Morales-Marco Antonio Barrera battle is one of dizziness. So many punches were thrown, so much leather landed, the momentum turned so many times. By the time it was all over, the rounds had blurred together to form just a general recollection of fistic mayhem, with few individual images standing out. Surely it was the Fight of the Year, but how could you even begin to select a Round of the Year? Could you make it a 12-way tie?

But if you had the foresight to stick a tape in the VCR on the night of February 19, then surely you've watched the Morales-Barrera fight again since then. Maybe you've watched it over and over and over. And once you've seen it enough to begin to separate the rounds in your mind, you realize that there is a round that stands apart from the rest—which is really saying something considering that any one of these rounds would stand apart if inserted into just about any other fight. That particular round is the fifth, three minutes that capture perfectly the drama, the fluctuating fortunes, and the sickening violence of the Morales-Barrera war.

It began with Barrera landing a flush right that backed Morales into the ropes, where the Mexico City warrior followed up with a left hook and a series of shots to the body. But Morales soon struck back, landing the right hand, the punch that had



Morales' right was connecting in the fifth—but then Barrera roared back

PHOTO BY ANTHONY NESTE/HBO

convinced nearly everyone to make "El Terrible" the prefight favorite. For the first time in the fight, Barrera wasn't punching right back, so Morales followed up with two more long rights to the jaw, then clubbed Barrera's left ear with a couple more sizzling rights. But Barrera kept his gloves up and his chin down, and never took a backward step, so although Morales was dominating the action, it was difficult to tell whether Barrera had been hurt.

As it turned out, if he had been, he recovered damned quickly, because with about a minute left in the round, Barrera exploded with lefts and rights, bloodying Morales' nose and sending him lurching into the ropes with a vicious hook. Morales tried to fight back, but Barrera's fists were quicker, and another left caused Morales to pitch forward, coming closer to going down than he ever had in his career. But his will kept him up, and his unbending desire to win kept him punching back, right up until the bell.

Needless to say, the crowd at Mandalay Bay gave the fighters a rousing ovation when the round ended. But then, they'd already done that four times before, and they'd do it seven more times after. All the rounds were *that* good. Yet somehow, this one stood out. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Etienne had Brewster ready to go at the end of the wild opener

As in Morales-Barrera, there was hardly a dull moment in the **Shane Mosley-Oscar De La Hoya** welterweight title fight, yet there was one round that was particularly compelling: the 12th. With the fight hanging in the balance, and with both boxers knowing it, they emptied their clips over the course of three wild minutes, their desperation and desire stoking memories of the famous 15th round between Larry Holmes and Ken Norton. When it was over, Sugar Shane had put a decisive exclamation point on his performance, sweeping the round on all cards and earning an upset split decision.

Though HBO's new youth-oriented series *KO Nation* hasn't been a huge success with critics or in the ratings, it did get off to a great start with round one of the **Clifford Etienne-Lamon Brewster** slugfest on the debut show. Brewster roared out of his corner and staggered Etienne just seconds into the fight, but "The Black Rhino" had taken over by the end of the first minute, and had Brewster bloodied and practically out on his feet by the round's end.

There were quite a few wild moments in the heavyweight punchout between **Hasim Rahman** and **Corrie Sanders**, and many of them came in the third round. Early in the stanza, Sanders connected with a left uppercut that pitched "The Rock" into—and nearly over—the ropes, but when the South African tried to follow up after the knockdown, Rahman caught him with a crunching counter right to the chin that evened the knockdown count at one apiece.

Any time **Naseem Hamed** goes down, it's fun, and the second round of his unexpected struggle with **Augie Sanchez** was especially enjoyable. Sanchez floored "The Prince" with two right hands early in the round, and though ref Michael Ortega blew the call and ruled it a slip, it was clear that Naz was in trouble. He nearly went down a couple more times after that, but finally took over the fight late in the round with a left hook that rocked Sanchez.

Another keeper was the ninth round of the **Felix Trinidad-Fernando Vargas** megafight. The fight was still just about too close to call entering the round, and both champions elected to plant their feet and duke it out *Rocky*-style. The fighters landed 32 punches apiece, nearly all of them powershots, in a tremendous display of heart from both competitors.

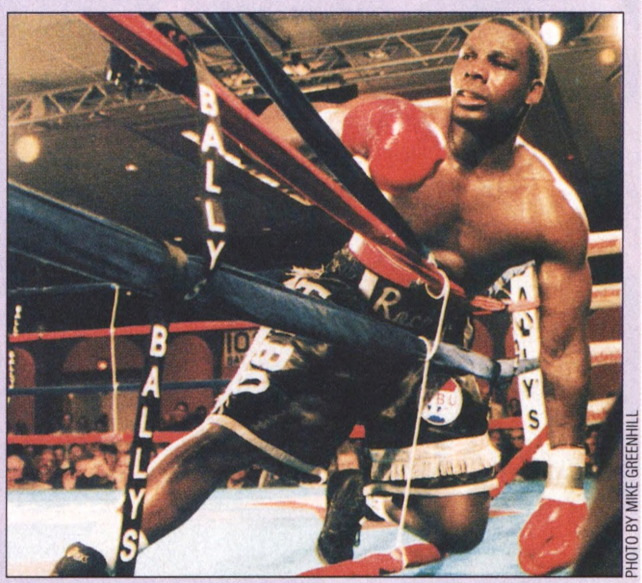


PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Rahman collapses into the ropes early in the third

KNOCKOUT OF THE YEAR

BEN TACKIE KO 10 ROBERTO GARCIA

Ben Tackie was in a haze. Everything the lightweight from Accra, Ghana, threw at former IBF junior lightweight champ Roberto Garcia was answered: a right cross was met by a left hook, a jab was countered with bodyshots. For eight rounds, Garcia dominated the plodding Tackie using slick boxing tactics. Even after suffering a knockdown in the ninth round courtesy of an overhand right, "Grandpa" looked as if a convincing victory over Tackie was well in his grasp.

Then the lightning bolt struck!

Needing a knockout to win and knowing Garcia was in trouble, Tackie closed in on his weakening adversary in the 10th and landed a picturesque left hook that caught Garcia on the tip of the chin, freezing him as he collapsed to the canvas. Garcia somehow managed to get back on his feet at seven, but referee Richard Steele took one look into his vacant eyes and wisely stopped the bout.

That one spectacular punch produced the Knockout of the Year and ensured Tackie a contending role in the lightweight and junior welterweight divisions.

"I saw Garcia, after only three rounds,

Tackie delivers a perfect left hook to Garcia's chin

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

was getting tired," said Joe Goossen, Tackie's head trainer and co-manager. "I told Ben after the third round, 'You're going to knock this guy out.' Ben's the type who keeps getting stronger and better as the rounds go on."

The victory provided redemption for Tackie, who had lost a unanimous 12-round decision to Goyo Vargas in January '99 on the Mike Tyson-Frans Botha undercard. It was the first setback of Tackie's career and served as the perfect blueprint for future opponents.

If Garcia gleaned a strategy from Vargas' victory over Tackie, the fierce African also learned something about Garcia from Grandpa's decision victory over John-John Molina, which came on the same undercard: Garcia was prone to fade in the later rounds.

Using the same approach as Vargas, Garcia set a torrid pace in the early going. He pelted the persistent Tackie with an array of punches, scoring points and winning rounds. Tackie, meanwhile, was predictably walking forward into a barrage of Garcia combinations, trying to land his powerful left hook.

The opportunity did not arise until the sixth, when Tackie established his power with a hook followed by a right that caused Garcia's nose to bleed. Though still struggling with Garcia's movement the next two rounds, Tackie struck again in the ninth, plowing the looping right that sent Grandpa to the canvas. When Tackie finally landed the punch he had been looking for all night, Garcia was ahead, 87-83, on all three scorecards. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Gamache is paralyzed by Gatti—and 19 added pounds

In one of the most controversial fights of the year, due to the winner's 14-pound weight advantage, **Arturo Gatti** kayoed **Joey Gamache** with frightening ease in the second round at Madison Square Garden. Gatti dropped Gamache twice in the first round with a pulverizing right and anvil-like left hook. Gamache began the second round on dubious legs, and Gatti finished him by landing a series of vicious punches from both hands before it was called off 41 seconds into the round. It might not have been fair, but it sure was sensational.

Lennox Lewis made his first appearance in England since suffering a second-round kayo loss to Oliver McCall in 1994 an electrifying one, blasting **Frans Botha** into oblivion in the second round. Lewis found his range midway into the first round, landing a right to Botha's chin that caused him to stagger backward. Lewis finished Botha off in the second, blasting him with a right to the temple, followed by a left hook, and a final right that lifted the 236-pound South African right off the canvas and propelled him through the ropes.

Light heavyweight **Julian Letterlough** was watching his undefeated record slowly slip away against **Demetrius Jenkins** during their battle in Hampton Beach, New Hampshire. He'd been decked by Jenkins in both the second and third rounds, but instantly erased the deficit with a brutal left hook that crumpled Jenkins in the seventh round, ending the fight.

In his first fight after his final-round knockout of Garcia, **Tackie** wasted little time with former lightweight champion **Freddie Pendleton**. Tackie turned out the veteran's lights with one pulverizing right hand in the first round.

Kirk Johnson was fearful of 240-pound **Oleg Maskaev** before their fight. That fear quickly turned in the fourth round, when Johnson feinted with a right, then smashed home a left hook that landed squarely on the tough Russian's chin. Maskaev went down, got up on unsteady legs, and was soon deposited through the ropes, falling on a group of ringside photographers.

Naseem Hamed found **Augie Sanchez** to be tougher than expected when they met in August. Although referee Michael Ortega mistakenly ruled a slip, Sanchez put a mild scare into "The Prince" in the second round, sending him to the canvas with a right hand. In the fourth, Hamed rebounded by going on the attack. He threw a three-punch barrage at Sanchez that had him out on his feet, and then, as Sanchez was falling, Naz crashed another right into his foe's head. Sanchez had to be carried out of the ring on a stretcher and taken by ambulance to the local hospital. Fortunately, a CATscan revealed no serious damage.

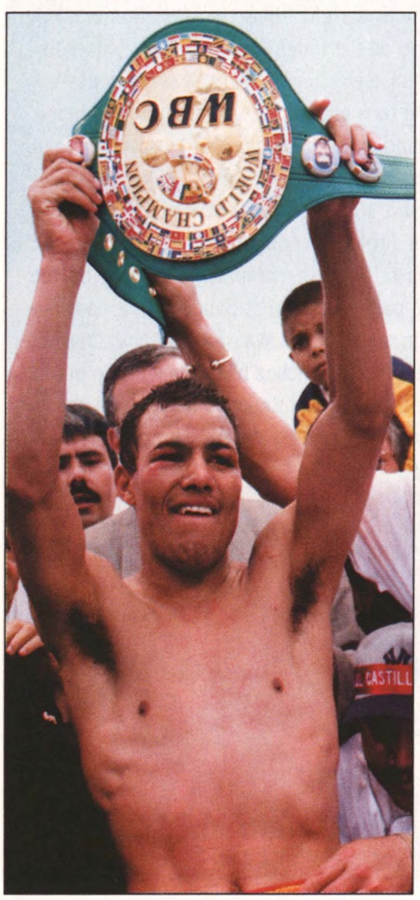
Lewis launches Botha into oblivion

UPSET OF THE YEAR

JOSE LUIS CASTILLO W 12
STEVIE JOHNSTON

How hot was Stevie Johnston coming into his June 17 lightweight title defense against Jose Luis Castillo? Try sticking your face on a George Foreman grill after it's been plugged in for 15 minutes, and you'll get a sense of how scorching Johnston was.

He was coming off a sensational 1999 campaign that saw him finish among the top two or three runners-up for Fighter of the Year, and then he kicked off 2000 by going home to Denver and thrashing tough Julio Alvarez in just two rounds, marking the first time the light-hitting southpaw had ever finished a title fight early. So when ABC decided to showcase Johnston on a rare Saturday afternoon broadcast just hours before Shane Mosley and Oscar De La Hoya took center stage across town, the unsung Castillo seemed like nothing more than a prop for "Li'l But Bad" to look good against.



PHOTOS BY SUMIO YAMADA

Castillo was a little too good for "Li'l But Bad"

Consider the facts: The most noteworthy win on Castillo's 40-4 (37) record was a kayo of used-up Jorge Paez in '99. The most recent of his four losses—all of which came by stoppage—was a 10th-round TKO against the very same Julio Alvarez whom Johnston had just destroyed. And except for a handful of minor fights, Castillo had generally been competing as a junior lightweight. In fact, he was still making the featherweight limit up through the spring of '98. Add it all up, and you can see why Johnston was a solid 6-1 favorite.

But there's a reason they actually fight

the fights, and you could tell by the end of the first round that Castillo wasn't just another wade-in Mexican slugger. He had plenty of clever moves and was, surprisingly, a little bit sharper than Johnston on the inside. Many of the rounds were tough to score, but midway through the fight, you had a sense that Johnston's second reign as 135-pound champion was in jeopardy, especially when you saw him spitting blood at the end of the sixth round.

Johnston tried to pick up the pace in the eighth, but Castillo hung with him and got the better of several outstanding rallies in the 10th and 11th. When the bell rang to end the 12th, Castillo's fans at the Bicycle Club Casino in Bell Gardens, California, began to celebrate, though they got a scare when the first score of 114-114 was announced. But the 116-111 and 115-113 cards that followed went to Castillo, and the huge upset the Mexican had appeared to narrowly earn in the ring was made official.

They fought a rematch three months later, and after 12 more close rounds, Castillo retained the title on a draw. This time, seeing him hang with Johnston wasn't a shock. But the first time, it sure was. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Maskaev expected Johnson to be an easy mark

One of the most shocking results of the year had to be journeyman **Sedreck Fields'** eight-round points win over **Shannon Briggs** in April. Sure, we knew long before this that Briggs wasn't the future champ he was once hyped up to be, but he was in the running for a payday against Mike Tyson, and Fields, with a record of just 9-9, wasn't supposed to get in the way of that. But Fields did something Briggs wasn't expecting: He stood up to the dreadlocked New Yorker. And as a result, he officially ended the myth of Shannon Briggs.

There were three other major upsets in the heavyweight division in 2000: **Chris Byrd** flew to Germany on short notice and ruined the perfect record of **Vitaly Klitschko**, frustrating the Ukrainian behemoth until he quit on his stool after the ninth round; **Kirk Johnson**, who didn't even give himself a chance of winning, surprised the streaking **Oleg Maskaev** with a through-the-ropes knockout in the fourth round; and **David Izon** weathered the assault of unbeaten **Derrick Jefferson** for eight one-sided rounds, then punched out the punched-out favorite in the ninth.

Junior welter slugger **Randall Bailey** was being hailed as the next Tommy Hearns, but after winning each of his first 21 fights by kayo, he met with defeat against an unknown Colombian named **Ener Julio**. Bailey was dropped in round one, had his right eye hammered shut, and lost a split decision.

Considering **Dingaan Thobela** was at his best as a lightweight about a decade earlier, he wasn't given a prayer when he challenged **Glenn Catley** for the WBC super middleweight title in September. But in round 12, trailing on the scorecards, Thobela caught Catley with a right to the jaw and pulled off a miracle knockout.

Like Thobela, **Clarence "Bones" Adams** had been more or less written off by the time his title shot came in 2000. And like Thobela, he made the most of his chance, knocking **Nestor Garza** down twice and winning a wide decision to capture the WBA super bantamweight title.

Considering **Virgil Hill** had already beaten **Fabrice Tiozzo** once before, maybe he shouldn't quite have been a 15-1 underdog when he travelled to France for the rematch. But then again, their first fight was seven long years ago, and "Quicksilver" had slipped quite a bit in that time—or so it seemed until he stunningly flattened Tiozzo in the first round.

PHOTO BY ANTHONY NESTE/HBO

Bailey's gruesome eye tells the story of his brawl with Julio

COMEBACK OF THE YEAR

VIRGIL HILL

Maybe it wouldn't have seemed like such a monumental comeback if Virgil Hill hadn't had to wait so long. He waited, and waited, and waited ... until finally, after five postponements, the two-time former light heavyweight titlist got his chance to return to the spotlight against WBA cruiserweight champ Fabrice Tiozzo in Villeurbanne, France, on December 9. By the time that chance finally came, Hill had been out of action so long, it was assumed he had nothing left, thus the 15-1 odds in favor of Tiozzo.

But Hill crushed Tiozzo with an overhand right in the last minute of the opening round, and suddenly it felt like we had all been transported by time machine to 10 years ago, when the Bismarck, North Dakota, native was in his prime. Hill battered the Frenchman, knocking him down three times in the first round before referee Luis Pabon called a halt to the bout, making Hill a three-time world champion. It was the best Hill had looked in five years, according to Showtime ringside analyst Bobby Czyz.

Entering the Tiozzo fight, it was hard to gauge what Hill had left. He hadn't fought since May 9, 1999, when he won a 10-round decision over Glenn Thomas, and the last time Hill was in a world title fight was in '97, losing a 12-round decision to Dariusz Michalczewski in defense of the IBF and WBA 175-pound belts. His next fight after that was a non-title stoppage loss to Roy Jones, and he'd only entered the ring twice since then.

But Hill showed no ill effects of the layoff against Tiozzo, whose lone previous defeat came by decision against Hill in '93, when "Quicksilver" was the WBA

Hill trounced Tiozzo to win his third world championship

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

light heavy champ. Hill had been criticized in the past for being a one-handed fighter and for lacking power. Tiozzo found out otherwise, as Hill worked his way in behind a good jab to land the big right.

"I had to lose 25 to 30 pounds to make light heavyweight, and that can take a lot out of you," Hill said during his postfight interview on Showtime. "I expected to win. If you compare our records and the type of opposition I've faced as opposed to his, I think I had him heavy on that side."

At 36 years and 11 months old, Hill became the oldest fighter to ever win a cruiserweight title. (Uriah Grant was the previous oldest at 36 years and five months.) Hill's knockout win, which came at the 2:59 mark of the first round, was the third-quickest victory in cruiserweight title history.

Whatever's next for Hill in 2001—a third fight with Tiozzo and a move up to heavyweight to challenge the winner of the Evander Holyfield-John Ruiz rematch have been mentioned—it won't change what an amazing feat he pulled off in 2000. With just one round of work, he scored the Comeback of the Year. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

Tyson behaved against Golota

At the start of 2000, no one was talking about **Mike Tyson** without laughing. "Iron Mike" and his traveling circus had been told by the Nevada Athletic Commission to head elsewhere after the Orlin Norris no-contest in October 1999. So Tyson took his hackneyed act to Europe—to a rousing reception. He vanquished Julius Francis and Lou Savarese in a pair of quick knockouts in front of huge crowds, then made his return to the United States with a victory over Andrew Golota. Despite Tyson threatening to retire before *and* after the Golota fight, Iron Mike found himself near the top of the heavyweight division again by the end of the year, with every boxing fan clamoring for a Lennox Lewis-Tyson showdown in 2001.

Marco Antonio Barrera opened 2000 under the perception that his career was on a downward spiral, and he wasn't given much of a chance against WBC super bantam champ Erik Morales. But what Barrera did on the night of February 19 in Las Vegas will be remembered by boxing fans and experts alike for a long time. Barrera and Morales engaged in a classic duel, and despite losing by a highly disputed split decision, Barrera may have gained more from that one defeat than from any previous victory. It showed he still possessed world-class talent, and Barrera capitalized on his momentum with three straight victories after the Morales loss.

Written off years earlier after suffering shoulder problems and general burnout, **Bones Adams** resurrected his career when he surprised Nestor Garza to win the WBA super bantamweight title by an upset decision on March 4 in Las Vegas. Adams, a late replacement for Danny Romero, fought with a broken right hand from the eighth round on and still dominated Garza.

Having quit in his last two major fights, **Yory Boy Campas** was seen as another step on Tony Ayala Jr.'s road back to title contention. Campas, however, had other plans. He showed flashes of what had made him a world champion: the hard chin, the brutal bodypunching. He pressured Ayala until "El Torito" could take no more, convincing him to surrender after the eighth round.

Troubled Canadian **Davey Hilton**, living in a halfway house and facing criminal charges, revitalized his career in December by capturing the WBC super middleweight title from South Africa's Dingaan Thobela via 12-round split decision in Montreal, Canada. What made the victory even more surprising was that the 37-year-old Hilton had lost his previous fight, dropping a lackluster decision to local rival Stephane Ouellet.

John-John Molina jumped back into the title picture with an impressive decision victory over streaking Ben Tackie on the Lennox Lewis-David Tua show on November 11 in Las Vegas. On that same undercard, rejuvenated **Jesse James Leija** kept his chances of a lightweight title shot alive with a unanimous-decision victory over Ivan Robinson.

Most thought Barrera beat Morales

EVENT OF THE YEAR

MOSLEY vs. DE LA HOYA

A tremendous fight, in and of itself, doesn't necessarily qualify for this category. For instance, although the Eric Morales-Marco Antonio Barrera junior featherweight war is THE RING'S Fight of the Year for 2000, it wasn't even under consideration for Event of the Year. But when Pomona's Sugar Shane Mosley and East L.A.'s Oscar De La Hoya hooked up on June 17 with the WBC welterweight title at stake, it was much more than just a great fight featuring a pair of outstanding fighters; it was also a great event. Let us count the ways:

•To start with, it was the sort of match that had fight fans salivating the moment they heard it was signed, a bout that featured two of the sport's classiest competitors meeting at the peak of their powers.

•For the first time in recent memory, a fight of this magnitude was held in the fighters' hometown, where it belonged, instead of Las Vegas or some other gambling resort. Promoter Bob Arum was rewarded with a packed house of more than 20,000 enthusiastic fans at Los Angeles' brand new Staples Center, setting a new state gate record of more than $8-million.

•It also ultimately proved to be the highest grossing pay-per-view fight of the

Mosley-De La Hoya was so much more than just a great fight

year, with more than 580,000 households purchasing the bout, making it one of the largest grossing non-heavyweight PPV events in history.

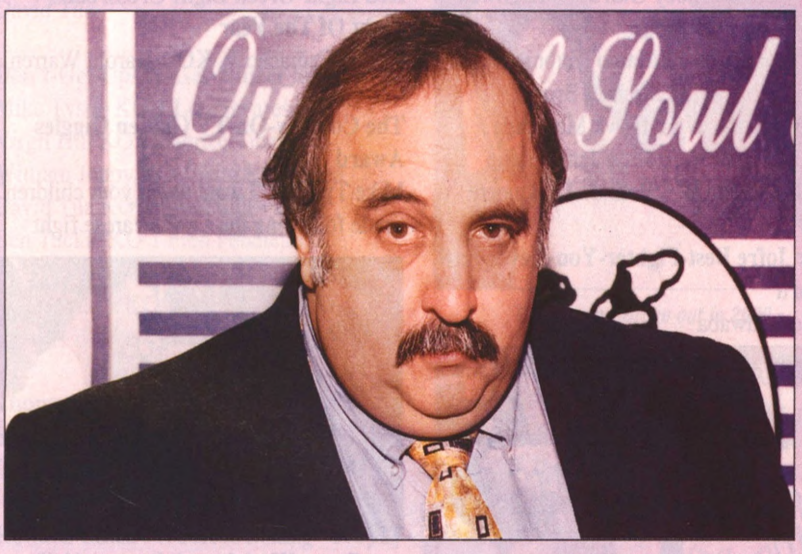
•The fight more than lived up to the hype. Unlike the lackluster Felix Trinidad-De La Hoya bout, it was everything a superfight should be, featuring bristling action, several changes of fortune, a blazing finish, a good decision, and, unless you count De La Hoya's postfight sour grapes, no controversy.

•Despite all of the above, the most significant thing about the fight was that it heralded Mosley's arrival as a true superstar. Overnight, casual fans, lured by "The Golden Boy's" crossover appeal, knew all about Sugar Shane. Given the perfect platform upon which to prove himself, Mosley rose to the occasion on both sides of the ropes, charming everyone with a personality as sparkling as his fistic skills. A few days after the fight, Mosley was Jay Leno's guest on *The Tonight Show*, as a whole new level of celebrity status suddenly opened up to him.

Mosley's triumph also led to a changing of the guard at the top of the pound-for-pound rankings, and his elevation to the number-one spot by THE RING and its sister magazines was soon emulated by the *USA Today* and other publications.

Above and beyond all else, Mosley-De La Hoya outshone every other boxing event of 2000 for two excellent reasons: It reinforced our faith in the sport and, thanks to the ascension of Sugar Shane to superstar status, altered the immediate course of boxing history. ■

HONORABLE MENTION

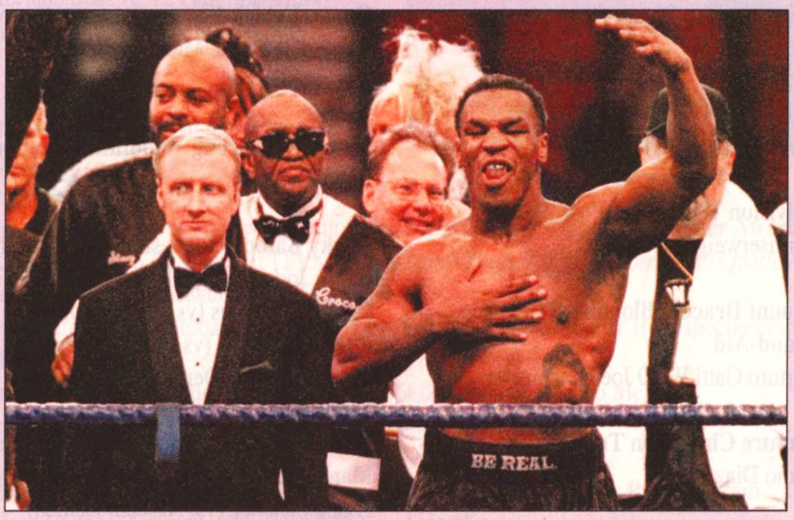


Kushner testified in–and was hurt by–the IBF trial

Last year's Event of the Year, the indictment of IBF President **Bob Lee** on racketeering charges, spilled over into 2000. The highly publicized trial took place in federal court in Newark, New Jersey, this past summer, but when the jury reached a verdict in August, it turned out to be somewhat of an anticlimax. Despite what appeared to be damaging testimony from government witnesses, Lee was found not guilty on the most serious charges against him, and convicted on only six of 33 counts. There were, however, unpleasant ramifications for promoters **Bob Arum** and **Cedric Kushner**, who admitted to paying bribes during the trial. Both promoters were fined by the Nevada State Athletic Commission, and Kushner was also fined by the New York State Athletic Commission. At press time, both are still in danger of losing their license to promote in Atlantic City casinos.

The best legal news of the year came when President Bill Clinton signed into law the **Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act**, which protects boxers from coercive contracts, reforms rankings, and requires financial disclosure by promoters, sanctioning organizations, referees, and judges.

Two of the game's more rambunctious events took place in the U.K., precipitated by **Mike Tyson**'s pair of visits to the birthplace of modern boxing. The first, in January, was a real lovefest between Tyson and the British fans. Iron Mike, mobbed by thousands of well-wishers and curiosity seekers wherever he went, sold out Manchester's 21,00-seat MEN Arena and knocked out Julius Francis in the second round. His second trip, however, didn't turn out nearly as well. When Tyson returned for a June match with Lou Savarese in Glasgow, Scotland, he feuded bitterly (some say physically) with promoter Frank Warren, refused to stop punching when referee John Coyle halted the fight in the opening round, and knocked Coyle to the floor in his eagerness to keep pounding his helpless opponent. Ultimately, Tyson was fined $187,500 for his misconduct.



Tyson sticks his tongue out at Scottish fans

THE 22nd ANNUAL HIGHLY UNOFFICIAL OFFICIAL AWARDS

Papa Trinidad: The best in the biz

Manager Of The Year
Felix Trinidad Sr.

Trainer Of The Year
Felix Trinidad Sr.

Most Exciting Division
Junior Middleweight

Most Boring Division
Strawweight

Division With Most Potential
Junior Lightweight

Division With Least Potential
Cruiserweight

Count Dracula Bloodbath Crimson Band-Aid
Arturo Gatti W 10 Joe Hutchinson

Future Champion Trophy
Julio Diaz

Tony Zale Bodypuncher Memorial
Marco Antonio Barrera

Billy Graham-Joey Giardello Highway Robbery Award
Erik Morales W 12 Marco Antonio Barrera
Willie Jorrin W 12 Michael Brodie
Irene Pacheco W 12 Hawk Makepula
Juan Lazcano W 10 Jesse James Leija
Christy Martin W 8 Belinda Laraquente

Eder Jofre Best-Fighter-You-Never-Saw Award
Lehlo Ledwaba

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Grant: Big-time flop

Duane Bobick Disappointment Award
Vitaly Klitschko, Michael Grant, Antonio Tarver

Henry Armstrong Windmill Imitation
Ray Oliveira

Rocky Balboa Gutsiest Effort Award
Junior Jones (vs. Paul Ingle)
Fernando Vargas (vs. Felix Trinidad)
Danny Williams (vs. Mark Potter)
David Izon (vs. Derrick Jefferson)
Bobby Tomasello (vs. Steve Dotse)
Erik Morales (vs. Marco Antonio Barrera)
Marco Antonio Barrera (vs. Erik Morales)
Augie Sanchez (vs. Naseem Hamed)
Derrick Jefferson (vs. Oleg Maskaev)
Emanuel Burton (vs. Floyd Mayweather)

Red Light-Green Light Crossroads Fight Of The Year
Hector Camacho Jr. KO 1 Harold Warren

The Comedy-On-TV Golden Giggles Award
Mike Tyson's "I want to eat your children" tirade following the Lou Savarese fight

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Tyson: "My defense is impregnable!"

Slapsie Maxie Rosenbloom Featherfists Award
Bruno Girard

Should've-Stayed-In-The-Pasture Wall Calendar
Wilfredo Vazquez, Jorge Paez, Saoul Mamby, Mike Weaver

Muhammad Ali Time-To-Retire Pension Check
Glenwood Brown, Philip Holiday, Anthony Jones, David Kamau, Frankie Randall, Jimmy Thunder, Ratanapol Vorapin

Tony Ayala Jr. Wasted Talent Trophy
Mark Johnson, Tony Ayala Jr. (how ironic)

Muhammad Ali "How To Lose With Class" Trophy
Chris Byrd

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Tua-Sullivan: Over before it started

Buster Mathis Miniature Empty Refrigerator
David Tua

Don't-Get-Up-To-Get-A-Beer Silver Mug
Mike Tyson KO 1 Lou Savarese
Virgil Hill KO 1 Fabrice Tiozzo
William Joppy KO 1 Rito Ruvalcaba
David Tua KO 1 Obed Sullivan
Ben Tackie KO 1 Fred Pendleton
Christy Martin KO 1 Sabrina Hall
Omar Sheika KO 1 Lloyd Bryan
Charles Brewer KO 1 Esteban Cervantes

Thomas Dewey "Fading Down The Stretch" Award
David Reid

Howard Cosell "We Love Boxing" Trophy
NBC
(For opting not to show any Olympic boxing until the final day of competition)

Ken Norton Media Good Guy Award
Sugar Shane Mosley

Spit-Or-Get-Off-The-Pot Award
James Toney, Keith Holmes

Joe Bugner Just-Glad-To-Be-Here Trophy
Julius Francis (vs. Mike Tyson)
Vuyani Bungu (vs. Naseem Hamed)
Will McIntyre (vs. Dana Rosenblatt)
Steve Pannell (vs. Frans Botha)

Frightening-Amounts-Of-Blubber Whaling Harpoon
Any Thunderbox match

Tap Tap Makathini Name Of The Year
Tsogtjargal Erdenetsogt (a.k.a. Kid Togo)

Archie Moore Ol'-Man-River Rocking Chair
Roberto Duran

Jake LaMotta Cast-Iron Chin Anvil
David Izon (vs. Derrick Jefferson)
Marco Antonio Barrera (vs. Erik Morales)
Erik Morales (vs. Marco Antonio Barrera)
Emanuel Burton (vs. Floyd Mayweather)
Jorge Munoz (vs. Danny Romero)

Most Improved Fighter Award
Joel Casamayor

Casamayor: Broke out in 2000

Gene Tunney Distinguished Champion Award
Felix Trinidad

Azumah Nelson "Where'd He Come From?" Trophy
Ener Julio (W 12 Randall Bailey)
Jose Luis Castillo (W 12 Stevie Johnston)
Malcolm Tunacao (KO 7 Medgoen Toyota-Thailand)
Masamori Tokuyama (W 12 In Joo Cho)
Victoriano Sosa (L 12 Paul Spadafora)
Omar Weis (L 12 Antonio Diaz)

TV Mismatches Of The Year
Andrew Golota KO 3 Marcus Rhode (Showtime)
Roy Jones KO 11 Richard Hall (HBO)
Mike Tyson KO 2 Julius Francis (Showtime)
Erik Morales KO 3 Mike Juarez (TVKO)
Arturo Gatti KO 2 Eric Jakubowski (TVKO)
Vassiliy Jirov KO 2 Esteban Pizarro (ESPN2)
Fabrice Tiozzo KO 6 Valery Vikhor (Showtime)

Never-In-A-Bad-Fight Purple Heart
Clifford Etienne, Fernando Vargas, Julian Letterlough, Micky Ward, Paul Ingle

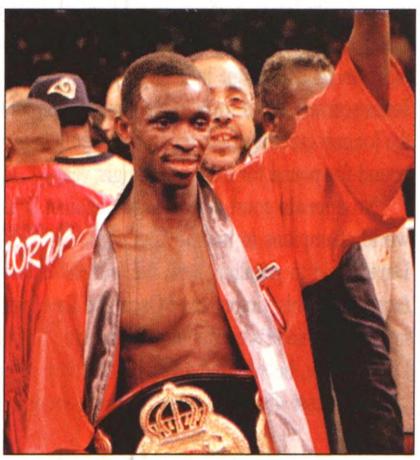
Best Tiny Man In Elevator Shoes
Naseem Hamed

Rip-Off-The-Public Non-Effort Of The Year
Andrew Golota (vs. Mike Tyson)
David Tua (vs. Lennox Lewis)
Obed Sullivan (vs. David Tua)
Roy Jones (vs. Eric Harding)
Zab Judah (vs. Hector Quiroz)

Steve Martin Arrow-Through-Head Ridiculous Gimmick
Hector Camacho Jr. entering the ring on a plastic horse (Is this the same kid who claimed in the past that he wanted to distance himself from his father's image?)

Mando Muniz "If At First You Don't Succeed" Persistence Award
Bones Adams, Derrick Gainer, Stephane Ouellet

Yogi Berra "It's Not Over Till It's Over" Resiliency Award
Dingaan Thobela (KO 12 Glenn Catley)
Ben Tackie (KO 10 Roberto Garcia)
David Izon (KO 9 Derrick Jefferson)
Julian Letterlough (KO 7 Demetrius Jenkins)
Mauricio Martinez (KO 5 Lester Fuentes)



Gainer: Persistence pays off

Dave Tiberi Disappearing Fighter Award
James Page, Reggie Johnson, Ike Quartey

Emile Griffith "Steady If Unspectacular" Trophy
Adan Vargas, Bronco McKart, Thomas Tate

Gerry Cooney Proper Pigmentation Award
Arturo Gatti

"BEST FIGHTER" POLL

A Survey Of The Experts

In the year of the recount, boxing is one element of our culture that does not have to rely on appeal after appeal to come up with a winner. No, THE RING EXTRA'S 2000 Pound-For-Pound Best Fighter Poll was not bogged down with controversy, though it did take a tight and hotly contested election for our eventual winner to unseat the disappointing incumbent and stave off the hard-charging newcomer.

In the end, it was Felix "Tito" Trinidad, fueled mightily by his impressive 12th-round knockout of Fernando Vargas on December 2, who barely edged Sugar Shane Mosley by a 126-123 margin. Finishing a somewhat distant third with 109 points was Roy Jones.

Trinidad's ascension snaps the stranglehold Jones has had on the top spot in the poll. Jones finished first last year for the second consecutive time—and for the fourth time in five years. But most experts were displeased with Jones' performances against David Telesco, Richard Hall, and Eric Harding. Some felt the dearth of opponents at light heavyweight was a factor in Jones' decline in 2000, while others objected to the minimal effort Jones seemed to put forth in his three fights. Jones, nevertheless, maintains the longest current streak going in the poll, being named among the 10 best pound-for-pound for the ninth straight year.

No appeals court would argue against Trinidad, who defeated three world champions in his last four fights, including a dominating win over David Reid to go along with the Vargas victory. But Mosley was a huge factor, since his victory over Oscar De La Hoya was much more convincing than Trinidad's questionable win over "The Golden Boy" in '99. As for De La Hoya, he suffered a precipitous drop in points, falling to fourth this year with just 43 points after finishing second to Jones last year with 85 points.

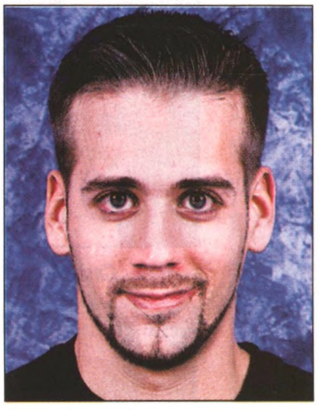
This year's panel of experts: ESPN2 *Friday Night Fights* studio analyst Max Kellerman, British *Boxing News* editor Claude Abrams, former junior lightweight champ and HBO Spanish language analyst Genaro Hernandez, Showtime boxing analyst Bobby Czyz, heavyweight contender Chris Byrd, HBO boxing analyst Larry Merchant, International Boxing Hall of Fame Director Ed Brophy, CNN/SI senior sports correspondent Nick Charles, and *Philadelphia Daily News* boxing writer Bernard Fernandez.

To compile the standings, we awarded points for each vote a fighter received: 15 points for a first place vote, 12 for a second-place vote, nine for a third-place vote, seven for a fourth-place vote, six for a fifth-place vote, five for a sixth-place vote, four for a seventh-place vote, three for an eighth-place vote, two for a ninth-place vote, and one for a 10th-place vote. Poll results prior to this year were reported in *KO Magazine*.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

Felix Trinidad stings Fernando Vargas with a right to the face

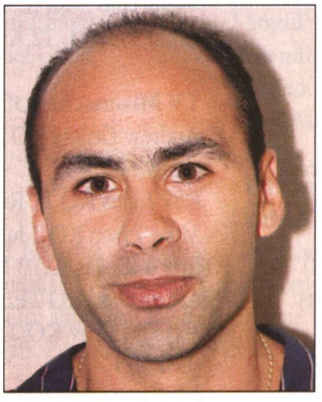
MAX KELLERMAN



1. Roy Jones
2. Shane Mosley
3. Felix Trinidad
4. Oscar De La Hoya
5. Floyd Mayweather
6. Ricardo Lopez
7. Naseem Hamed
8. Diego Corrales
9. Bernard Hopkins
10. Fernando Vargas

"I know it's unfair to rate Roy Jones above Trinidad and Mosley. However, pound-for-pound, you're not rating fighters based on merit for a title shot. It's who you think the best in the world is right now, and I think the best is still Roy Jones. I'd be dishonest if I said anyone other than Roy Jones."

CLAUDE ABRAMS



1. Roy Jones
2. Felix Trinidad
3. Shane Mosley
4. Ricardo Lopez
5. Naseem Hamed
6. Lennox Lewis
7. Bernard Hopkins
8. Floyd Mayweather
9. Paulie Ayala
10. Marco Antonio Barrera

"Jones has dominated three divisions rather than two, and Jones is a class above everyone in his division. Jones to me is more supreme, even though Trinidad has taken greater scalps. Trinidad comes close to defeat; Jones has never come close to a genuine defeat. Whenever Jones has been in a superfight, he's won so easily, he's made it look like a mismatch."

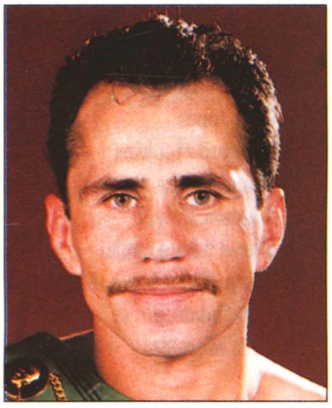
PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Shane Mosley takes the WBC welterweight title from Oscar De La Hoya

PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

Roy Jones punishes David Telesco

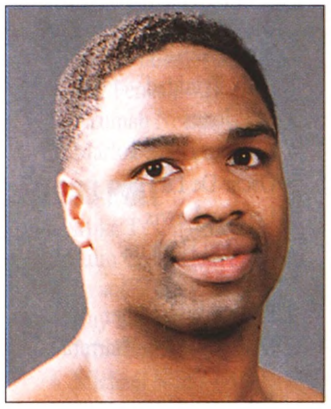
GENARO HERNANDEZ



1. Felix Trinidad
2. Shane Mosley
3. Ricardo Lopez
4. Roy Jones
5. Diego Corrales
6. Floyd Mayweather
7. Naseem Hamed
8. Bernard Hopkins
9. Paulie Ayala
10. Erik Morales

"Not to disrespect Shane in any way, but Felix has fought more quality fighters. Felix is an intelligent fighter, like Shane is, but Felix has more power than Shane. He has an ability to go in and take charge of a fight. Roy has to face someone like a Trinidad, because there's no one out there left for him."

CHRIS BYRD



1. Roy Jones
2. Felix Trinidad
3. Shane Mosley
4. Lennox Lewis
5. Oscar De La Hoya
6. Floyd Mayweather
7. Diego Corrales
8. Kostya Tszyu
9. Naseem Hamed
10. Bernard Hopkins

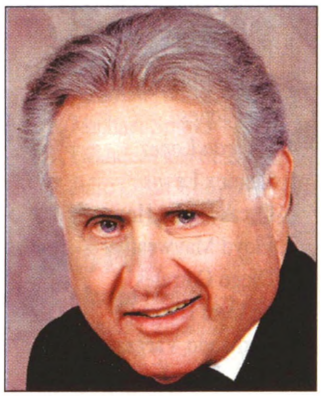
"Roy doesn't have the competition, but the skill level is still there. No one can beat him. He would be the most dominant boxer in the world if he were in the Marvin Hagler, Thomas Hearns, Roberto Duran, Ray Leonard era. From 154 to 168, Trinidad is the best. His focus and determination are incredible."

BOBBY CZYZ

1. Felix Trinidad
2. Roy Jones
3. Shane Mosley
4. Ricardo Lopez
5. Diego Corrales
6. Floyd Mayweather
7. Zab Judah
8. Bernard Hopkins
9. Naseem Hamed
10. Acelino Freitas

"I told everyone that Trinidad would knock out Vargas between the eighth and 12th rounds, and he did. Jones hasn't had the competition that's necessary to test him, and that's not always his fault. Shane Mosley can do everything; he can box, he has smarts, and he can punch. Lopez is proven, but he doesn't have a proving ground in front of him."

LARRY MERCHANT



1. Shane Mosley
2. Felix Trinidad
3. Roy Jones
4. Bernard Hopkins
5. Oscar De La Hoya
6. Naseem Hamed
7. Erik Morales
8. Marco Antonio Barrera
9. Diego Corrales
10. Floyd Mayweather

"Mosley earns the top spot because he defeated De La Hoya more convincingly than Trinidad. Trinidad can overtake Mosley if Mosley slips, or if Trinidad were to move up to middleweight and beat Hopkins. I tend to put on top the guys who have been doing it for a while and have been proving themselves fighting big fights and fighting over time."

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

De La Hoya homes in on the ducking Derrell Coley

PHOTO BY STEVE MATTEO/HBO

Floyd Mayweather lands a left hook against Emanuel Burton

ED BROPHY

1. Shane Mosley
2. Felix Trinidad
3. Roy Jones
4. Naseem Hamed
5. Oscar De La Hoya
6. Lennox Lewis
7. Bernard Hopkins
8. Fernando Vargas
9. Floyd Mayweather
10. Marco Antonio Barrera

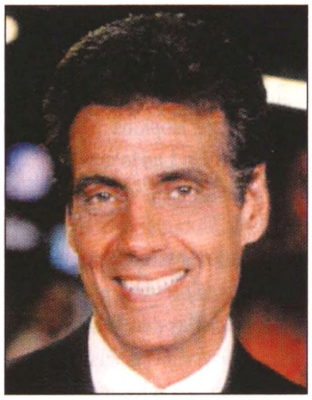
"Shane Mosley earned the top spot with his victory over Oscar De La Hoya. What I'm seeing in Shane is the capability of fighting any style at any time. His ability to change his style with each opponent reminds me of Sugar Ray Robinson and also of Sugar Ray Leonard. He's very in tune to what has to be done at a given moment and he's very well focused."

BERNARD FERNANDEZ

1. Shane Mosley
2. Felix Trinidad
3. Roy Jones
4. Bernard Hopkins
5. Oscar De La Hoya
6. Lennox Lewis
7. Floyd Mayweather
8. Diego Corrales
9. Zab Judah
10. Erik Morales

"When I look at Mosley, I still see a guy who has the entire package. Trinidad is obviously moving up with a bullet. I'm still a little concerned by his fight with De La Hoya, who I had beating him. I don't see Jones making much of an effort fighting anyone with a pulse. There's more to being number one than talent."

NICK CHARLES



1. Felix Trinidad
2. Shane Mosley
3. Roy Jones
4. Ricardo Lopez
5. Lennox Lewis
6. Oscar De La Hoya
7. Floyd Mayweather
8. Diego Corrales
9. Naseem Hamed
10. Fernando Vargas

"Trinidad showed me his power and class and he erased any doubt that he is anything but at his peak by beating Vargas. For a purist, a real boxing fan, it's encouraging that it appears much of the quality is from fighters still on the rise. There is an infusion of young blood, mixed with a good amount of veterans today."

THE RING

1. Shane Mosley
2. Felix Trinidad
3. Roy Jones
4. Oscar De La Hoya
5. Diego Corrales
6. Naseem Hamed
7. Floyd Mayweather
8. Lennox Lewis
9. Erik Morales
10. Bernard Hopkins

"The fine line separating Mosley and Trinidad is Sugar Shane's clear-cut decision over De La Hoya. Jones had three lackluster title defenses last year, and though he may be the most talented boxer in the world today, he rarely shows it. He has not been motivated for a fight since he avenged his one loss to Montell Griffin in 1997."

THE RESULTS

1. Felix Trinidad—126 points
2. Shane Mosley—123
3. Roy Jones—109
4. Oscar De La Hoya—43
5. Floyd Mayweather—39
6. Naseem Hamed—37
7. Ricardo Lopez—35
8. Diego Corrales—33
9. Bernard Hopkins—32
10. Lennox Lewis—31

ALSO RECEIVING VOTES

Erik Morales—8
Zab Judah—6
Marco Antonio Barrera—5
Fernando Vargas—5
Paulie Ayala—4
Kostya Tszyu—3
Acelino Freitas—1

1999 POLL

1. Roy Jones—150
2. Oscar De La Hoya—85
3. Floyd Mayweather—78
4. Felix Trinidad—68 (tie)
4. Shane Mosley—68 (tie)
6. Mark Johnson—47 (tie)
6. Ricardo Lopez—47 (tie)
8. Erik Morales—21
9. Bernard Hopkins—16
10. Fernando Vargas—15

1998 POLL

1. Roy Jones—141
2. Oscar De La Hoya—123
3. Felix Trinidad—67
4. Shane Mosley—65
5. Evander Holyfield—55
6. Mark Johnson—45
7. Naseem Hamed—33
8. Ricardo Lopez—23
9. Floyd Mayweather—19
10. Pernell Whitaker—14

1997 POLL

1. Oscar De La Hoya—123
2. Roy Jones—117
3. Ricardo Lopez—83
4. Evander Holyfield—80
5. Felix Trinidad—65
6. Pernell Whitaker—37
7. Naseem Hamed—28
8. Junior Jones—22 (tie)
8. Mark Johnson—22 (tie)
10. Johnny Tapia—18

1996 POLL

1. Roy Jones—123
2. Oscar De La Hoya—107
3. Pernell Whitaker—92
4. Evander Holyfield—64
5. Felix Trinidad—59
6. Ricardo Lopez—56
7. Terry Norris—28
8. Ike Quartey—21
9. Azumah Nelson—12
10. Yuri Arbachakov—11

1995 POLL

1. Roy Jones—138
2. Pernell Whitaker—126
3. Oscar De La Hoya—74
4. Felix Trinidad—59
5. Marco Antonio Barrera—48
6. Riddick Bowe—44
7. Ricardo Lopez—37
8. Julio Cesar Chavez—18
9. Ike Quartey—16
10. Naseem Hamed—12

1994 POLL

1. Pernell Whitaker—130
2. Roy Jones—129
3. Frankie Randall—53
4. Ricardo Lopez—45
5. Orlando Canizales—39
6. Chiquita Gonzalez—38
7. James Toney—36
8. Gerald McClellan—33
9. Felix Trinidad—29
10. Kevin Kelley—28

1993 POLL

1. Pernell Whitaker—147
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—86
3. Terry Norris—84
4. James Toney—76
5. Michael Carbajal—39
6. Evander Holyfield—36
7. Buddy McGirt—28
8. Roy Jones—23
9. Orlando Canizales—22
10. Ricardo Lopez—21

1992 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez—136
2. Terry Norris—91
3. Pernell Whitaker—85
4. Buddy McGirt—60
5. Riddick Bowe—45
6. Orlando Canizales—36
7. Azumah Nelson—34
8. Lennox Lewis—24
9. Julian Jackson—18
10. Roy Jones—15 (tie)
10. Mike McCallum—15 (tie)

1991 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez—138
2. Pernell Whitaker—100
3. Evander Holyfield—78
4. Mike Tyson—55
5. Meldrick Taylor—48
6. Mike McCallum—38
7. Thomas Hearns—34
8. Khaosai Galaxy—25
9. Terry Norris—22
10. Simon Brown—21

1990 POLL

1. Julio Cesar Chavez—123
2. Pernell Whitaker—104
3. Mike Tyson—71
4. Meldrick Taylor—57
5. Buster Douglas—51
6. Simon Brown—27
7. Antonio Esparragoza—25
8. Michael Nunn—23
9. Evander Holyfield—21
10. Humberto Gonzalez—14

1989 POLL

1. Mike Tyson—147
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—91
3. Meldrick Taylor—61
4. Michael Nunn—60
5. Evander Holyfield—56
6. Pernell Whitaker—46
7. Ray Leonard—28
8. Jeff Fenech—27
9. Azumah Nelson—18
10. Marlon Starling—16

1988 POLL

1. Mike Tyson—144
2. Julio Cesar Chavez—118
3. Evander Holyfield—66
4. Ray Leonard—55
5. Jeff Fenech—44
6. Michael Nunn—33
7. Azumah Nelson—32
8. Jung Koo Chang—23
9. Buddy McGirt—21
10. Sumbu Kalambay—18

NO POLL IN 1987

1986 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—138
2. Mike Tyson—92
3. Donald Curry—59
4. Thomas Hearns—52
5. Edwin Rosario—47
6. Azumah Nelson—45 (tie)
6. Michael Spinks—45 (tie)
8. Evander Holyfield—32
9. Julio Cesar Chavez—26
10. Hector Camacho—22

1985 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—150
2. Hector Camacho—86
3. Michael Spinks—85
4. Donald Curry—78
5. Thomas Hearns—42
6. Barry McGuigan—32
7. Milton McCrory—25
8. Pinklon Thomas—22 (tie)
8. Julio Cesar Chavez—22 (tie)
10. Larry Holmes—21

1984 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—112
2. Aaron Pryor—77
3. Larry Holmes—72
4. Eusebio Pedroza—66
5. Hector Camacho—50
6. Jeff Chandler—47 (tie)
6. Ray Leonard—47 (tie)
8. Michael Spinks—45
9. Thomas Hearns—34
10. Donald Curry—26

1983 POLL

1. Marvin Hagler—147
2. Aaron Pryor—93
3. Larry Holmes—91
4. Michael Spinks—66
5. Jeff Chandler—57
6. Thomas Hearns—45
7. Alexis Arguello—29
8. Wilfredo Gomez—28
9. Hector Camacho—24
10. Eusebio Pedroza—12

1982 POLL

1. Ray Leonard—142
2. Alexis Arguello—97
3. Marvin Hagler—76
4. Salvador Sanchez—72
5. Wilfred Benitez—68
6. Larry Holmes—61
7. Jeff Chandler—25
8. Eusebio Pedroza—18
9. Aaron Pryor—17
10. Thomas Hearns—14 (tie)
10. Dwight Muhammad Qawi—14 (tie)

1981 POLL

1. Thomas Hearns—116
2. Ray Leonard—108
3. Marvin Hagler—76
4. Larry Holmes—75
5. Alexis Arguello—62
6. Wilfredo Gomez—58
7. Eddie Mustafa Muhammad—28
8. Matthew Saad Muhammad—24
9. Wilfred Benitez—18
10. Roberto Duran—13 (tie)
10. Aaron Pryor—13 (tie)

1980 POLL

1. Roberto Duran—96
2. Ray Leonard—93
3. Wilfredo Gomez—88
4. Danny Lopez—65
5. Pipino Cuevas—54
6. Alexis Arguello—40
7. Larry Holmes—32
8. Wilfred Benitez—26
9. Vito Antuofermo—25 (tie)
9. Matthew Saad Muhammad—25 (tie)

WHO WILL STAY & WHO WILL GO?

Five Men Who Will Keep Their Titles ... Five Who Won't

By William Dettloff

Like you, we spend a lot of time complaining that there are too many titlists in the game. If you count the champions from the WBA, WBC, and IBF in the 17 currently recognized weight classes, that's what, 1,100 champions or something, right?

You would think that with so many guys running around calling themselves champions that it would be a fairly simple task to select five who still will be champs by the end of the year and five who won't be. You'd be wrong. Why? Well, there's good news and bad news.

First the bad: Check out the cruiserweight and super middleweight divisions for example. Three of the champions—Juan Carlos Gomez, Sven Ottke, and Bruno Girard—never defend in the States and we've never heard of the guys they're fighting. How can we get a handle on how good they are? Same goes for Masamori Tokuyama, Malcolm Tunacao, and Yosam Choi. (Look 'em up.)

Now the good: There are lots of guys we would have included here but didn't because, as we went to press, they were lining up to face other guys we'd have included here. That's a good thing. The trend toward title unification and superfights that began in 2000 looks likely to continue in 2001.

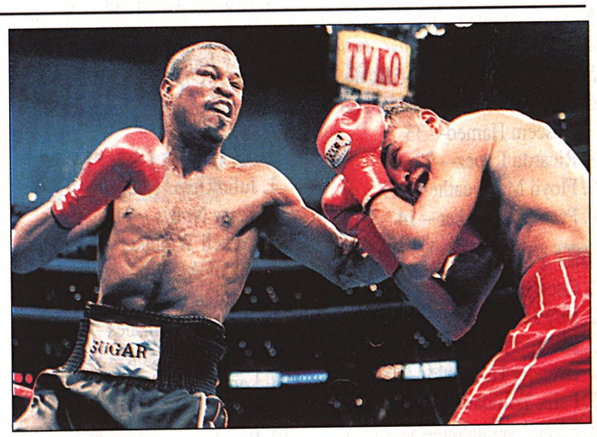
So we had to work a little harder to predict that the reigns of Shane Mosley, Lennox Lewis, Paulie Ayala, Steve Forbes, and Bernard Hopkins will continue and that those of William Joppy, Keith Holmes, Derrick Gainer, Jose Luis Castillo, and Francisco Castillejo will not. We'll take it. It's a small price to pay for what we're getting.

The Five Who Will Remain Champions Throughout 2001

SHANE MOSLEY
WBC Welterweight Champion

If this pick seems like a bit of a no-brainer, it's because, well, it is. And not just because Mosley is one of the two or three best fighters in the game. The possibility exists, after all, that he could relinquish the welterweight title, jump up in weight again, and campaign as a junior middleweight. In fact, Mosley has 154 in his plans. But he won't do it until he's cleaned out the welterweight division, the same way he more or less cleaned out lightweight. And not even Sugar Shane could run through every reasonably deserving welterweight within a year.

So the questions become, who are the welterweights who could challenge Mosley in 2001, and do any stand a chance of beating him? Start at the top. Mosley-Oscar De La Hoya II is still a possibility, and let's face it: Mosley didn't blow De La Hoya away, and whether or not you like him, "The Golden Boy" is still the second-best 147-pounder out there and still on the pound-for-pound list. If Mosley can do again what he did the first time around—and he'd be a favorite to do so—he will have removed his most serious threat.



No fighter is unbeatable, but considering Mosley's impressive victory over De La Hoya, it's highly unlikely that there's a 147-pounder in the world capable of taking the title away from Sugar Shane.

So who else is there? Vernon Forrest? Not fast enough. James Page? Too crude. Shannan Taylor, Andrew Lewis, and Oba Carr? Too green, too green, and not green enough. It's simple: Mosley will be the welterweight champ for as long as he wants to be. Then the junior middleweights will have to worry about him.

Ayala proved that his first victory over Tapia was no fluke by outpointing his arch-rival again in 2000. Outside of Tim Austin, there's probably not another bantamweight with a half-decent chance of beating Ayala.

PAULIE AYALA
WBA Bantamweight Champion

You get the sense that Ayala and Johnny Tapia could fight 10 times and each time Ayala would win by a hair. The decisions Ayala got in their two meetings troubled some folks, but when fights are that close, a sneeze can knock the scorecards one way or the other, and that's going to rile up the guys in the loser's corner. Either way, that Ayala twice did what he did with Tapia speaks volumes about his talent. It also hints that he'll be around for a while.

Also, remember that styles make fights. Ayala is a born counterpuncher. He loves it when guys come to him. That's why he did so well against Tapia and, conversely, so poorly against Danish runner Johnny Bredahl. So who are the really good boxers at bantam? WBC champ Veerapol Sahaprom? Forget it. All slugger. Jorge Eliecer Julio? One-dimensional puncher. Adan Vargas? He'd have a better shot than most, but Ayala's too seasoned for him.

The only championship-caliber boxer-puncher at bantam is IBF champ Tim Austin. He is Ayala's only real threat, and after Ayala decisioned Tapia in the rematch, there was some talk about a unification match. We get the sense it won't happen—Austin is promoted by Don King, Ayala by Top Rank, and it's doubtful that two bantamweights, even a duo as skilled as Ayala and Austin, would generate the kind of green needed to convince Bob Arum and King to work together. And even if it did, we're not sure Austin would win.

LENNOX LEWIS
Heavyweight Champion

People have been waiting so long for Lewis to lose that a lot of them missed something pretty important along the way: The big guy can fight. Who would have predicted that in his last three fights Lewis would blow out Michael Grant in two rounds, nearly decapitate poor Frans Botha, and then turn and shut out David Tua? Face it: Lewis probably won't consistently fight the way we like our heavyweight champs to fight. But he's versatile, so he keeps winning. There's no reason to think that will change in 2001.

Consider Lewis' likely roster of title challengers in 2001: Mike Tyson, who even at this point might have a puncher's chance against Lewis, but little else; Kirk Johnson, a competent enough boxer-puncher who hasn't had nearly the experience he'd need to challenge Lewis and who already has implied he'd like more seasoning before trying; Wladimir Klitschko, who is completely unproven, and maybe Hasim Rahman or John Ruiz. He's already beaten everyone else who counts. So if you're one of those guys who can't stand Lewis, start rooting hard for the Tyson match to be made. He's your only chance, and he's a slim one at that.

Lewis went 3-0 in title fights in 2000, including a one-sided decision over hard-hitting Tua (pictured). Don't be surprised if the big Brit is still heavyweight champion of the world this time next year.

BERNARD HOPKINS
IBF Middleweight Champion

What is it these days with old fighters who don't know they're not supposed to be able to fight anymore? Chronologically speaking, Hopkins, like thirtysomething heavyweight champion Lennox

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Hopkins walks away from a battered Robert Allen after tallying a seventh-round TKO. The inability to get fights with marquee opponents will help "The Executioner" stay on top another year.

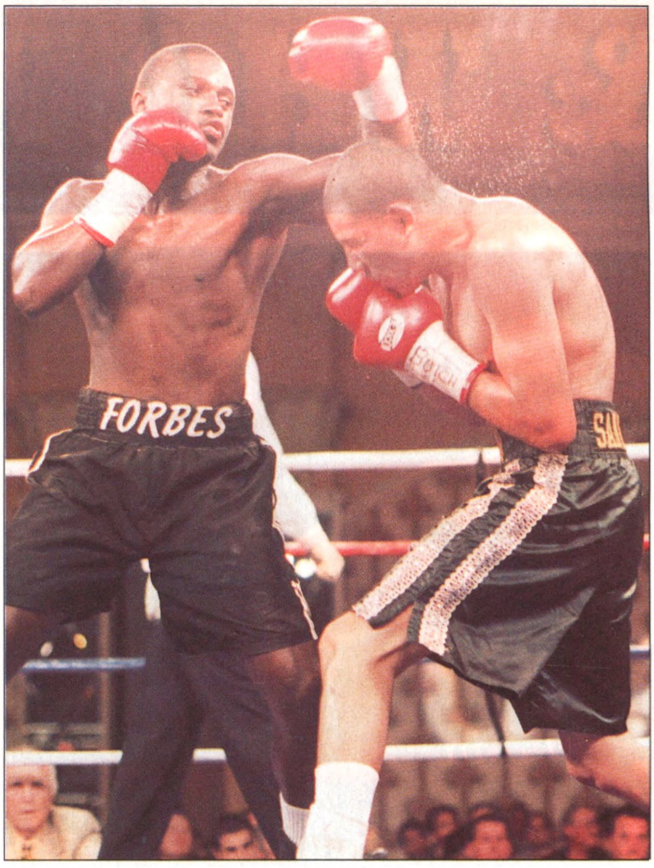


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Forbes hooks Ernesto Martinez en route to a 10-round decision. With most of the division's big names otherwise engaged, the new IBF junior lightweight champion should be safe for the next 12 months.

Lewis, should be a gate keeper-type by this time. He's not. He may have slipped a notch or two over the last year, which explains why every fight lately features more bad tumbling than a Gerald Ford highlight film. (It's also because as he's learned the value of fighting dirty.) But he's still the world's best 160-pounder, and that's one of the reasons he'll still be a champion when the year ends.

The other reason? Promoters can't stand Hopkins. He's too good and he won't play the game right. That means he won't get the big fights he wants, and big fights are the ones that bring the risk. You probably won't see Hopkins against Felix Trinidad because Hopkins won't work for Don King. Same with Hopkins against William Joppy or Keith Holmes. No matter how attractive a fight it is, you may not see Hopkins against David Reid. Reid is promoted by America Presents, whom Hopkins is suing.

Hopkins will have trouble getting big fights because of who he is, but his inability to get those big fights probably will lengthen his title reign. He may get Roy Jones, but even if he does, it won't be for the middleweight title.

STEVE FORBES
IBF Junior Lightweight Champion

A champion doesn't have to be the best fighter in the world or even the best in his weight class to escape his first year as a titlist with the belt still intact. Sometimes circumstances smile on you, and a smart fighter knows he can sit quietly and watch from a distance the stars of the division picking one another off.

As we went to press, WBC junior lightweight champ Floyd Mayweather and former IBF champ Diego Corrales were readying for their showdown. At the same time, WBA titlist Joel Casamayor was preparing to defend against another former champ, Roberto Garcia. Brazilian bomber Acelino Freitas wants the winner and probably will get him.

Just like that, five potential Forbes challengers are out of the picture, almost assuredly for the year. None of the remaining champions will want to unify after facing such dangerous challengers, and Forbes won't be looking for them, either. Forbes isn't a bad fighter and in spots can resemble a young, fresh Stevie Johnston. But he loses to Mayweather, Corrales, Casamayor, and probably to Garcia and Freitas, too. That leaves for him the decidedly less imposing group of Jongkwon Baek, Lakva Sim, Jesus Chavez, and Yong Soo Choi, and there's no assurance that he'll face any of those guys. He'll keep his head down and make it through the year.

The Five Who Won't

KEITH HOLMES
WBC Middleweight Champion

Under normal circumstances, we'd say it isn't necessarily a bad thing for a fighter to go to court in an attempt to break his contract with Don King, which Holmes did in late-2000. With

Holmes, pictured regaining the WBC middleweight title from Hassine Cherifi, has left Don King, who kept him in low-risk defenses. Without King's protection, Holmes will probably lose the belt before 2001 is over.

Holmes, however, we're not sure, from a longevity standpoint, that it was a great move.

For starters, Holmes never was busy under King; just four defenses in four years split between his two fights with Hassine Cherifi (indeed, the lack of activity was the basis for Holmes' lawsuit). That kind of schedule might qualify one as a mediocre champion, but let's face it, it will also make him a longer-reigning one provided his opponents are soft enough. Paul Vaden, Robert McCracken, and Richie Woodhall, to name three of Holmes' challengers, were soft enough.

This could be a case of being sorry when you get what you ask for. King doesn't like his champions facing tough competition (particularly when he doesn't have options on that competition), and that's helped Holmes. While it's true that King wanted Holmes to face WBA champ William Joppy, that came after Holmes made his displeasure with King public. It's easier for Holmes with King than it will be without him, and sometime before the end of the year, King will have had the last laugh.

JOSE LUIS CASTILLO

WBC Lightweight Champion

It clearly is unfair to deny Castillo the credit he deserves after he twice gave Stevie Johnston all he could handle. The popular theory is that all the tough fights Johnston has had finally caught up with him and he just can't turn it on anymore. You could make a case for it, but then why did he look so good against Billy Schwer, Angel Manfredy, and Julio Alvarez?

Having said that, Castillo playing the role of the world's best lightweight is not entirely convincing. It's not because he doesn't do anything single thing great, because other guys have excelled without great singular talent. It's that we're not certain there's not something about his style that troubles Johnston, or that, yes, maybe Johnston is on the downside. Some guys lose it all at once. Really, there's not much in Castillo's record to indicate that he's anything but a durable, moderately talented fighter who shows up in shape and outlasts guys. In some divisions that's enough. Not at lightweight.

Assuming Castillo doesn't meet Johnston again, and throwing out unification fights with either Paul Spadafora or Takanori Hatakeyama, there's former champ Cesar Bazan, Manfredy, John-John Molina, Ben Tackie, and unbeaten Artur Grigorian to name just a few. One of them will get Castillo before the year is through.

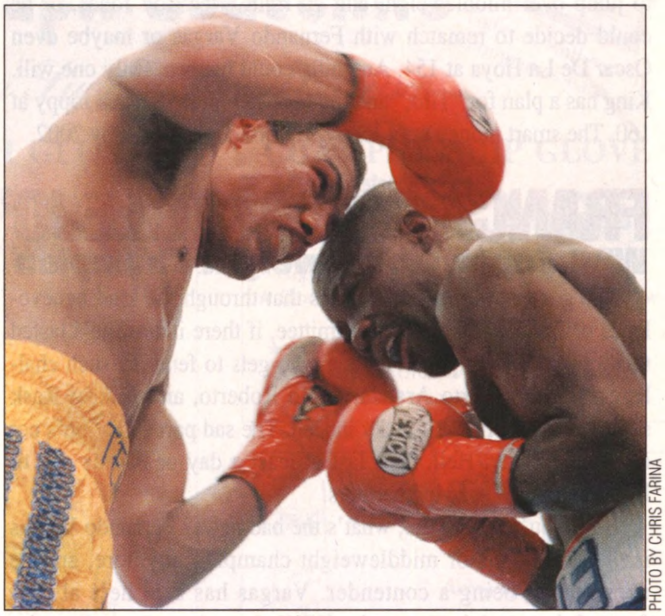


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Castillo obviously has Stevie Johnston's number, but can the uninspiring Mexican hang on to the WBC lightweight title for another year? The best thing he has going for him is a mediocre field of challengers.

WILLIAM JOPPY

WBA Middleweight Champion

For the most part, Joppy has gotten a bad rap. Everyone places him second to Bernard Hopkins among the best middleweights, and who knows, maybe he can beat Hopkins. He also gets heat for not unifying two-thirds of the title with Keith Holmes, but it never was Joppy who kept it from happening.

Joppy is a good fighter. He throws crisp, snappy combinations, and has a good pair of legs. The problem is that he and Felix Trinidad share a promoter, and Trinidad wants to move up to 160 and win a title. He can't go for Hopkins because Hopkins won't do business with Don King the way King wants him to. He won't go for Holmes because King is ticked off at Holmes and besides, what would it prove? That leaves Joppy. You don't want to be him.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

The fact that Joppy, pictured outpointing Fernando Zuniga, is in Felix Trinidad's sights doesn't bode well for the WBA middleweight champion, as it's difficult to envision him beating "Tito."

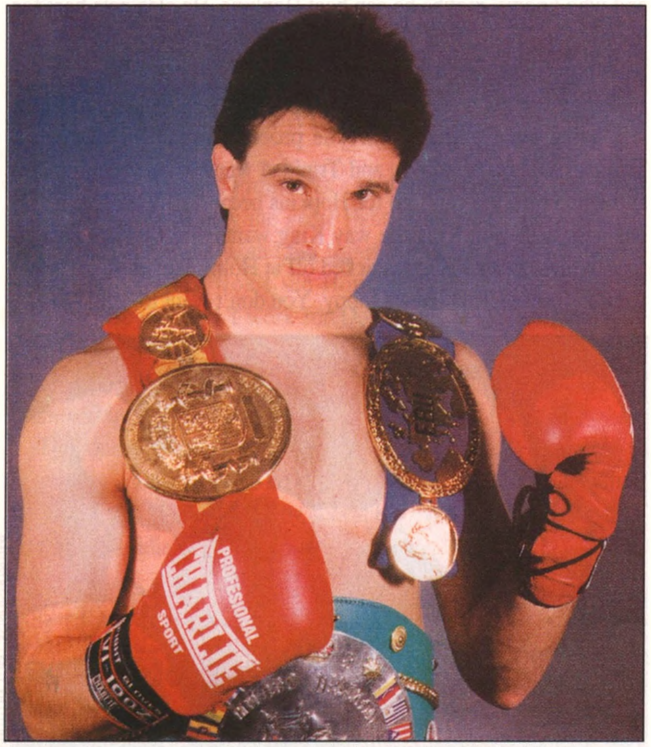
Lots of things can happen between now and whenever that could keep a Trinidad-Joppy fight from happening. Hopkins could be convinced to sign his life over to King, Trinidad could decide to jump over middleweight and go right after Roy Jones, or he could decide to rematch with Fernando Vargas or maybe even Oscar De La Hoya at 154. Anything could happen. Only one will. King has a plan for "Tito," and the next step in the plan is Joppy at 160. The smart money says Joppy's a former champion by 2002.

FRANCISCO CASTILLEJO
WBC Super Welterweight Champion

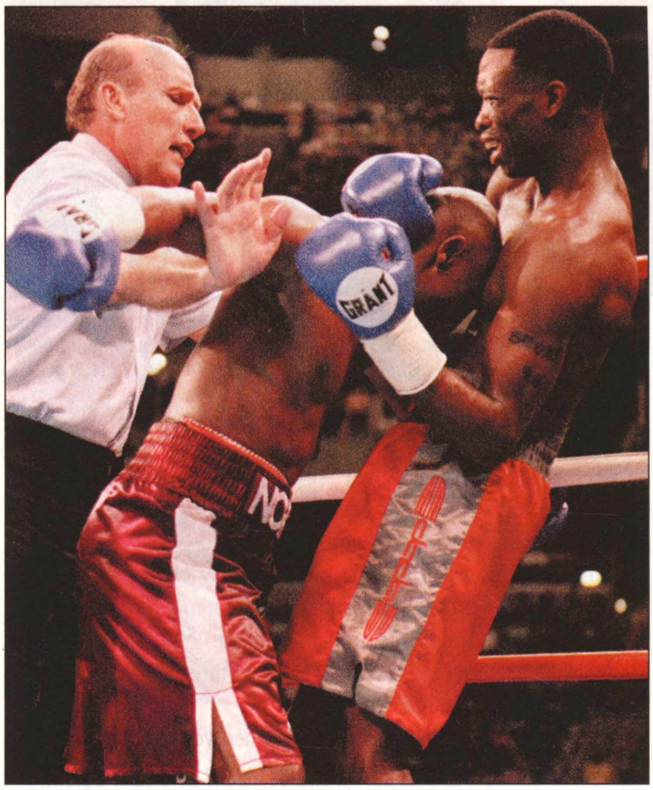
The good news for Castillejo is that through the kind benevolence of the WBC's ratings committee, if there is one, he's lasted this long as a champion. Anyone who gets to fend off such challengers as Humberto Aranda, Paolo Roberto, and Mikael Rask should consider himself lucky indeed. The sad part is that he's not an awful fighter. Hell, he'd last at least a day or two as one of Felix Trinidad's sparring partners.

So if you're Castillejo, what's the bad news? Fernando Vargas isn't the IBF junior middleweight champion anymore, and he doesn't like being a contender. Vargas has said he's always favored the green belt worn by WBC champions. In case you're not following closely, that would be the one worn by Castillejo. Why would Castillejo fight Vargas instead of continuing his romp through European daisy-pickers? Because he'd make more money getting his head handed to him by Vargas than he would making 10 title defenses against nondescript Spanish challengers.

There's more good news: At this writing, Trinidad hadn't decided for sure if he wanted to go to middleweight yet. He might want to unify junior middle first. Bye, Francisco. Okay, say neither Vargas nor Trinidad gets Castillejo. Can he remain champ for another year? No way. There are some good 154 pounders out there—Winky Wright, Bronco McKart, and Ike Quartey among them. He can't avoid them forever.



Castillejo has retained the WBC 154-pound title five times, but most of his victims have been third-raters. A step up in the caliber of his opposition could spell disaster for the Spaniard.



There was nothing pretty about Gainer's controversial title-winning fight with Norwood, and when you factor in the new WBA featherweight champ's china chin, a long reign doesn't appear likely.

DERRICK GAINER
WBA Featherweight Champion

Gainer is the picture of persistence. He lost to Roberto Garcia, got knocked out by Kevin Kelley, knocked out by Diego Corrales, but he kept trying, kept beating good fighters, and finally won the title with a bizarre but altogether deserved victory over Freddie Norwood. Don't think like some do that too much of his success is owed to buddy and manager Roy Jones; Jones isn't taking and throwing the punches when Gainer fights. Gainer is.

There are reasons, though, that it took so long for Gainer win a title, and they don't have much to do with top guys avoiding him because of his skills, though a little of that went on. Gainer has some problems. The most serious is his chin. The guy just can't take one on the button real well from a good puncher. His other problem is he's too often too willing to test that chin against the wrong guys, and there are some punchers at featherweight.

As we went to press, a defense against hard-hitting Juan Manuel Marquez had been canceled. Good move. But there's still Guty Espadas or Erik Morales, whichever one wins their showdown. And the survivor of the Naseem Hamed-Marco Antonio Barrera fight. It may not even take a big name to topple Gainer. He could be beating some WBA mandatory silly, walk into something, and it's goodbye title. He's a good fighter. He just won't be a champion for long. ■

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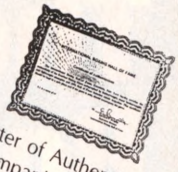

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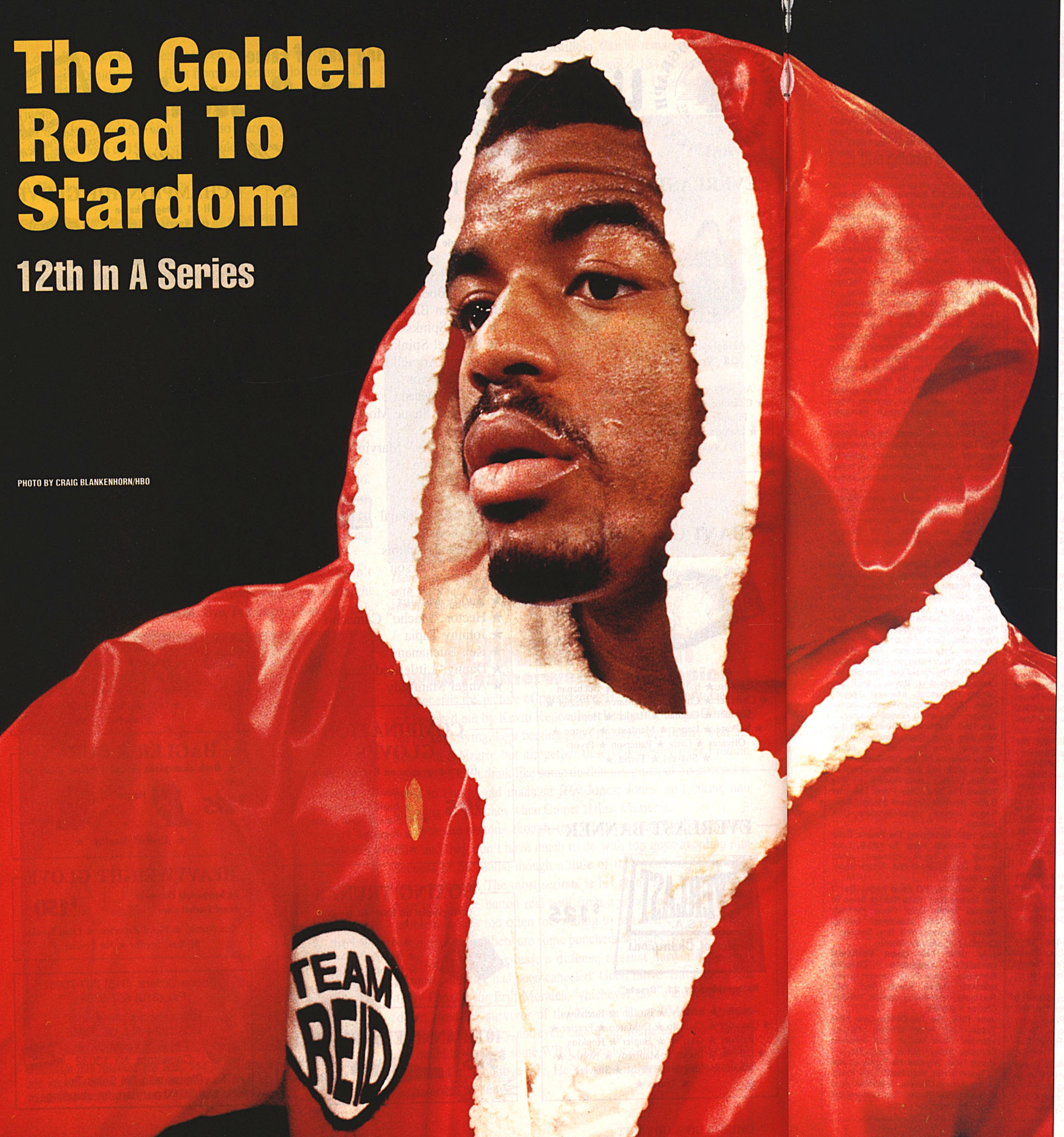

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DAVID REID REACHES A CAREER CRISIS

By Bernard Fernandez

Perhaps everything would have worked out differently had David Reid not thrown that big right hand, the one that knocked Cuba's Alfredo Duvergel goofy with the American hopelessly behind on points in the third and final round of the 156-pound final at the Atlanta Olympics. Expectations—and signing bonuses—are so much lower for silver medalists than for those who take gold, particularly in such dramatic fashion.

And what if Reid had settled for, say, a bronze? Or hadn't medaled at all? What if that little domestic-disturbance scrape he found himself in during pre-Olympic camp in Orlando, Florida, had resulted in his being dismissed from the U.S. team altogether? What then?

Had Reid been anything less than what he was, namely the only gold medalist in boxing on the grandest stage in sports, as Oscar De La Hoya had been four years earlier, it's fairly certain the Philadelphian would have entered the professional ranks through the side or back door instead of having the red carpet rolled out for him out front. Reid was heralded as an instant superstar, a sure bet, a can't-miss, and that is the kind of pressure that weighs on some young prospects so heavily that careers buckle before they can be reinforced by their own merits.

What also is certifiable is that Reid, the onetime department store stock clerk, was presented a golden key to the throne and all the attendant perks. Some—Sugar Ray Leonard and De La Hoya come to mind—handled immediate wealth and fame as casually as most people handle a trip to the neighborhood grocery store to pick up bread and milk. Others are forever stamped as disappointments no matter how successful they are as pros, simply because nothing they ever did could match the incomparable high of having that gold medal draped around their necks.

Into which category Reid ultimately is placed is still a matter of conjecture. Oh, sure, his accelerated development resulted in a world championship in only his 12th pro bout, lots of exposure on HBO, and purses sizable enough that he could buy his mom her dream house a lot quicker than he might have had he started out in $300 four-rounders at the Blue Horizon. Nothing wrong with any of that, right? But it also can be argued that Reid might have benefited had he built his career slowly, step by step and brick by brick, as was the case with such blue-collar success stories as Marvelous Marvin Hagler and a North Philly antagonist, IBF middleweight champion Bernard "The Executioner" Hopkins. Sometimes, maybe the hard, slow way really is the best way.

(Continued on page 90)

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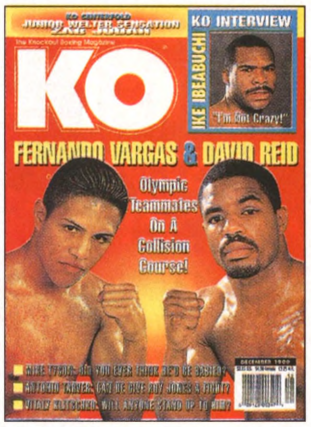

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PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Instead of winning via DQ when challenger Antwun Echols dislocated his shoulder with an illegal bodyslam, Hopkins opted to keep fighting. The result was an exciting 10th-round victory for the Philadelphia tough guy that boosted his marquee value.

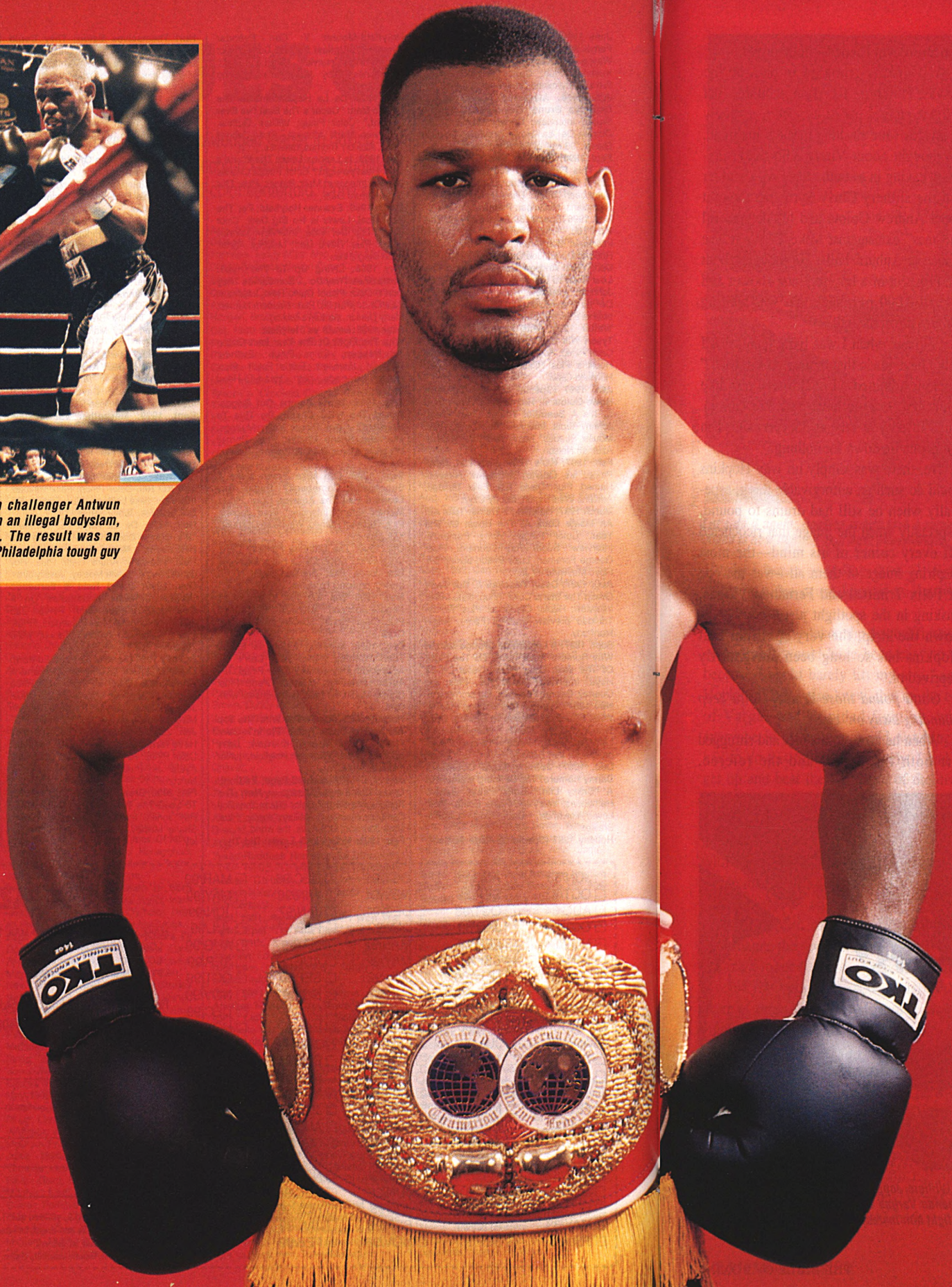

PHOTO BY JASON ROSS LAVIN

The Noise That Won't Go Away

JUST GIVE BERNARD HOPKINS HIS SUPERFIGHT ALREADY!

By Ted Bodenrader

Drum roll, please.

In the noisiest corner of the noisiest hotel of the noisiest town on earth, everything settles for a moment to welcome the middleweight champion of the world into these wildly chaotic settings.

Amid the jungle of shirts and ties at this exclusive postfight bash, the champ eases his way into the banquet room, instantly entangled in an octopus of adoring hands and arms. Bernard Hopkins has just nailed down his 12th middleweight title defense—tying the streak of the great Marvelous Marvin Hagler—but the real work is just getting underway. Bum shoulder and all, he's about to start pounding those drums.

"Gotta keep pounding them," said Hopkins, holding his separated shoulder. "Pounding those drums like I'm in Africa."

Just as Hopkins begins to belt out a familiar self-promotional tune, his rhythm is disrupted by Kery Davis, the new big wig at HBO, who just took in Hopkins' 10th-round discarding of hard-hitting Antwun Echols. Davis discreetly corners Hopkins over at the hors d'oeuvres table, puts an arm around his throbbing shoulder, and whispers into the champ's ear.

"Bernard, I knew you were tough," said Davis. "And I knew you could fight. But now I know other stuff."

The "other stuff" that Davis speaks of is the same stuff that the champ has known all along, that no matter what you try to take from Bernard Hopkins, "his arms, his legs, his title belts, whatever," there are a

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Hopkins proudly displays his IBF belt prior to his return match against Echols. When it was all over, "The Executioner" had tallied his 12th successful defense of the title he won in 1995.

few things that just aren't there for the taking.

You can never take this guy's fighting heart and you can never take his sizzling desire to prove that he's the best, regardless of what WWF tactics are thrown his way. Eventually, bum shoulder and all, Hopkins will get you.

"I would have fought Echols with my feet if I had to," said Hopkins. "I would have fought him with no arms, I swear. It was the same thing they tried to do to me in the Robert Allen fight, just different body parts."

What had just transpired an hour or so before at The Venetian in Las Vegas was eerily reminiscent of Hopkins' bizarre no-contest affair with Allen, when the champ was left with a sprained ankle after being errantly tossed from the ring.

Shortly after Hopkins and Echols snarled fangs at one another during the customary staredown, out broke a street-fight that was much more fitting for the streets of North Philly. Rabbit punches, bodyslams, hitting on the break, this clash had it all. If the fight were any dirtier, they'd have aired it on the Spice Channel.

By the sixth round, Echols, 24-4-1 (23), began to realize that the story at The Venetian was about to entail the same unsatisfying finish as the first showing, when Hopkins nailed shut a convincing 12-round defense by way of judges' points. So, Echols did what any other frazzled fighter would in such a situation. He flattened Hopkins with a hard bodyslam that would have done Jesse Ventura—and Prince Naseem Hamed—quite proud.

As Hopkins grimaced in pain on the canvas, clutching the right shoulder that had just popped out of its socket, a variety of images were flashing through his mind. He thought about Vitaly Klitschko, haplessly caving in to both an aching shoulder and the slithery Chris Byrd. He thought about Andrew Golota and his disgraceful "no mas" exit against Mike Tyson at The Palace at Auburn Hills. He thought about the prospect of a hot, soothing shower and the $700,000 paycheck that was waiting for him down the hall.

"I knew, when I was lying there, that I could have made that money on my back," Hopkins admitted. "I could have quit like Klitschko. I could have quit like Golota. But I'll tell you this, at 35 years old, I'm not gonna lie down for nothing."

No, there was simply no way Hopkins could do such an unforgivable thing, especially when he still had drums to pound. Especially when the image that ricocheted off every corner of his mind—the most inspiring image of them all—was the one of Felix Trinidad and Fernando Vargas, basking in the spotlight just a few blocks down the strip, the very spotlight that Hopkins has so long been unrightfully deprived of.

Gotta pound those drums. Gotta keep pounding away on 'em.

When he arose to his feet and shrugged off both the doctor and the referee,

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

One of Hopkins' rivals, WBA middleweight champ William Joppy, scored a fourth-round TKO of Jonathan Reid (pictured) on the Felix Trinidad-Fernando Vargas undercard to set up a fight with Trinidad. Hopkins, however, believes "Tito" should fight him instead.

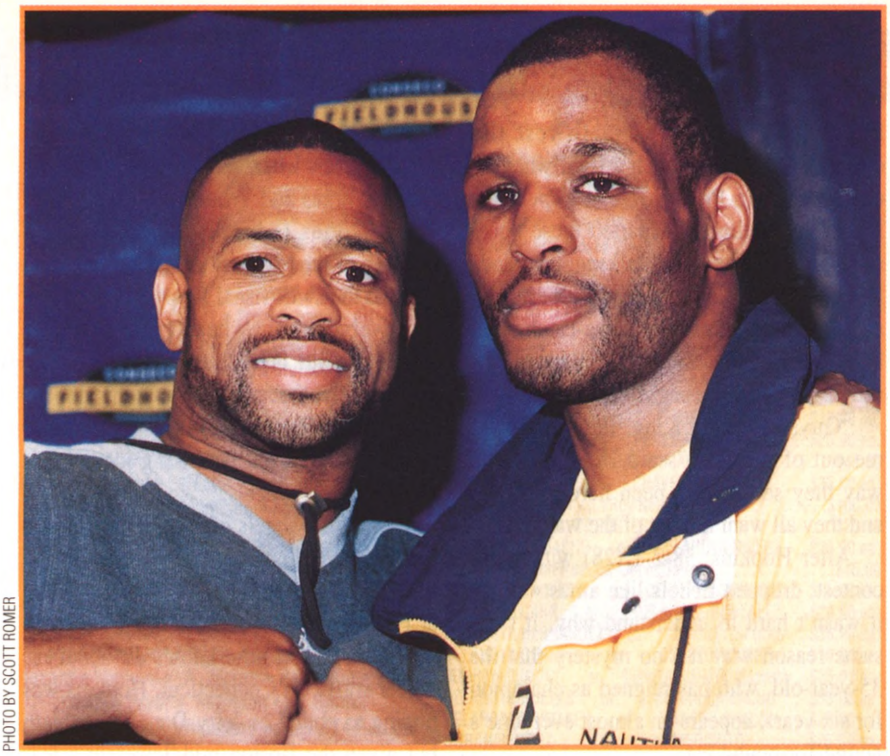

PHOTO BY SCOTT ROMER

Let's do it again: Hopkins would love a rematch with Roy Jones, who outpointed him in 1993, but Jones is now fighting as a light heavyweight, 15 pounds heavier than Hopkins' best fighting weight.

Hopkins began pounding them all right, pounding the drum known as Antwun Echols' face.

"I could have taken the disqualification, sure, and it would have been easy to do because I could barely lift my arm," said Hopkins. "But I also knew, that on the eve of Vargas and Trinidad fighting, with everyone in the boxing world watching, I had to do this thing impressively. I had to get up and beat the top threat of the division and had to do it convincingly. There would be no other way. This was too big an opportunity for me, and at 35 years old, with all these other guys in town, I knew I had to make my statement a bold one."

The years of anger and frustration of being the hottest commodity around without a name, the years of being stuffed into a dark closet for a maverick attitude toward the sport's powers-that-be, the years of being avoided and ignored for his high-risk, low-reward image, it all came out in the next four rounds, channeled in the form of left- and right-handed bullets.

Hopkins teed off on Echols like he were Trinidad, Vargas, William Joppy, and Roy Jones all intertwined into one. Each of the four faces darted through his eyes as he laid the 10th round pummeling on Echols, prompting the overworked Tony Weeks to mercifully intervene at the 1:42 mark.

"Even with a separated shoulder, he beat that guy to a pulp," said Hopkins' adviser, Lou DiBella. "Anyone else in this game would have taken the easy DQ, no doubt about it. But in the biggest fight of his career, where he headlined a show on the biggest boxing weekend of the year, he pulled off one of the greatest performances of his life. What you saw the other night was Bernard Hopkins showing the world what it's been missing for years."

But even if the entire world didn't tune into the brilliant performance, they surely heard the pounding of the drums all over Las Vegas. The work the IBF champion completed with his fists was just the start of a long and lucrative weekend. Bernard Hopkins the manager and Bernard Hopkins the promoter had yet to punch in to work. And with every major promoter, manager, and media outlet in town, Hopkins knew exactly what he had to do.

"Right after the fight, I wanted to pound the drums," he said. "You all know that I paid my dues, that I went against the grains, but now I've got all aces in my hands. I want the world to know that 35 for me is not a death sentence. I am not 35 years old. I am 35 years wise and I'm gonna keep banging the drums to let the people know I'm here."

(Continued on page 74)

Bernard Hopkins

(Continued from page 73)

Even those outside The Venetian quickly knew that Hopkins was in the house. When he yanked himself free of the red mitts and squeezed into the business attire, Hopkins began spending the $10,000 he'd invested in his one-man promotional campaign, handing out flyers, caps, T-shirts, trading cards, and six-foot posters all around town, all bearing his name alongside his hardened face. For one night, this was no longer Wayne Newton's town. This city belonged to the tough pug from Philly.

The self-proclaimed "Satchel Paige of boxing" would then trigger an even wiser decision on the following night, hopping uptown to the Mandalay Bay, where the postfight press conference would center on two courageous young men: Felix Trinidad and—surprise—Bernard Hopkins.

While the whooping Trinidad handed out at Mandalay sent Vargas to the local hospital, Hopkins swiftly moved in to fill the void of the beaten tiger. This time, his drum-beating encore miraculously drowned out the rap session of promoter Don King.

While King's initial plans were to lift WBA/IBF 154-pound champion Trinidad up to 160 pounds, where WBA champion William Joppy (who's also part of King's stable) would be awaiting, "The Executioner" quickly put to rest the crowd's yearning for such a fight when he called out the Puerto Rican superstar. Before the gathering departed these noisy settings, everyone was talking Trinidad-Hopkins. It was quite a feat, indeed, considering Joppy himself was eye-catching in knocking off Jonathan Reid in four swift rounds earlier in the night.

"Guys like Don King, they just want me out of the way," said Hopkins. "The way they see it, I've been here too long, and they all want me out of the way."

After Hopkins, 38-2-1 (28) with 1 no-contest, dropped Echols like a nasty habit, it wasn't hard to understand why. It's the same reason why it's no mystery that the 35-year-old, who has reigned as champion for six years, appears on almost everyone's pound-for-pound list.

A big middleweight at 6', Hopkins has the power, the hand speed, the experience (11 years), and truly one of the hardest chins in the business, four solid reasons to keep both King and Trinidad looking the other way.

"If Trinidad is talking about going up to fight Jones, he should have to go through me," said Hopkins of the highly gossiped Jones-Trinidad proposal. "Even Roy said that himself. He went on record to say that he won't consider Trinidad a worthy opponent until he fights Bernard Hopkins first. The road through 160 must go through Bernard Hopkins."

Yet, even when Hopkins looks below him at Vargas and Trinidad, up above him at 175 Jones is hardly lobbying for a rematch of the toughest test of his career.

And the swift-fisted Joppy?

"Everyone knows he ain't the best middleweight out there," said Hopkins. "To prove it, I've been asking to fight him for years, asking for a chance to unify the middleweight titles, but Don King just continues to spin the wheels."

While the wheels of boxing continue to spin, Hopkins is not just waiting idly on the side. He will headline a March 24 show at Foxwoods Casino, once again on HBO, the network that now knows all about his "other stuff." In Connecticut, Hopkins was hoping to pound on lefty Dana Rosenblatt, but given the Boston middleweight's fear of anyone with a pulse, he'll most likely be pounding on Carl Daniels, who recently beat Brian Barbosa in an IBF eliminator.

While he's not training for such an affair, Hopkins the promoter spends four to five hours on his computer every day "reading, learning, and absorbing," taking in every ounce of knowledge that will help him attain his delightful day in the spotlight. It will be the day he comes out from underneath his trademark black mask to taste the pleasures that boxing can so stingily deliver. But in the meantime, he'll continue to do what he does best.

"I'm gonna keep pounding the drums, pounding them to get Trinidad to fight me, pounding them for a chance to unify the middleweight titles, pounding them to get Roy to come down to a comfortable weight."

He's a little bit Satchel Paige, a little bit Ringo Starr, and he's not going away until he makes one hell of a racket. Those drums that the maverick slugger has been pounding away on for years, they're finally beginning to be heard. And by the time Hopkins finally decides to leave this game, when there are no more drums and no more middleweights in his sights to pound on, he hopes there's only one thing left to do.

He hopes to be pounding his chest. ■

Ted Bodenrader is a freelance writer based in Boston and a regular contributor to this magazine.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/DIRECTV

You don't get to call yourself the "Satchel Paige of boxing" by sitting on your butt. The 35-year-old Hopkins stays young by spending countless hours in the gym working with trainer Bouie Fisher.

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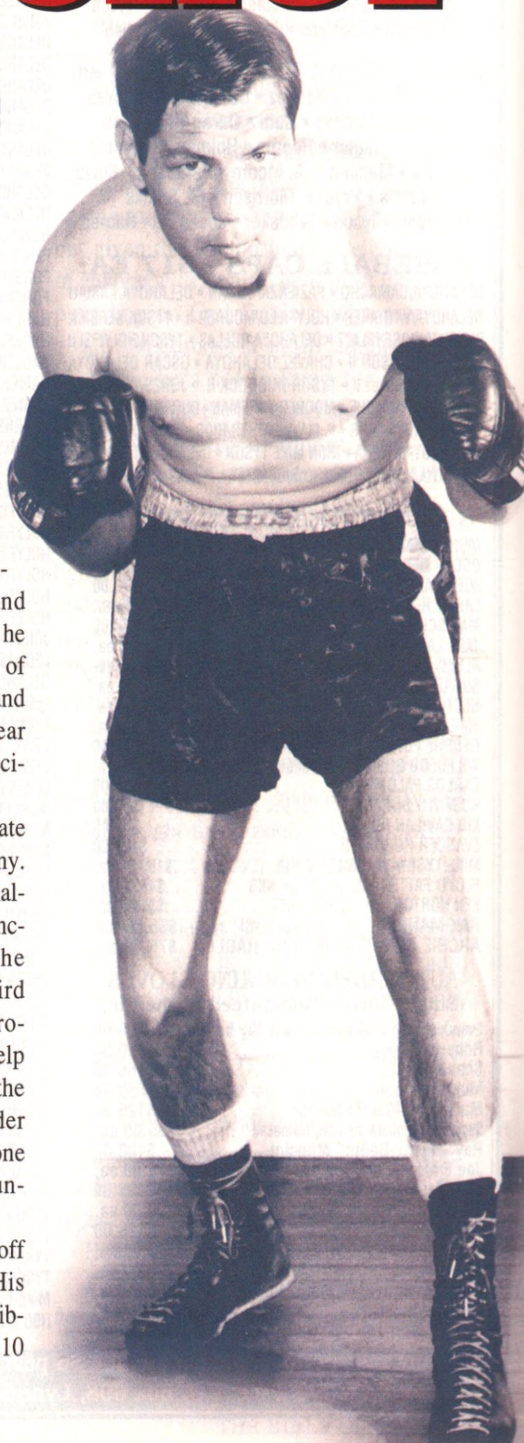
Joey Archer

"I Always Thought I'd Be A Champion, But Life Balances Out"



By Robert Cassidy

Joey Archer was a thinking man's fighter. Boxing was an art form, and to him a fight was won with the mind. He brought intellect to the crudest of sports. Ask him, though, and he hesitates in confirming that because he is extremely modest. It is quite clear that Archer remains a thinking man who carefully chooses his words. He dissects questions the way he once dissected opponents with his jab. But it's okay if he doesn't want to talk about his own talents. Listen to what others have to say.

•Gil Clancy, trainer of Emile Griffith: "Joey Archer was about as good a boxer as you could find. He was in the same mold as Willie Pep. The only drawback he had was that he lacked a big punch."

•Joe Miceli, a middleweight contender whose career was winding down just as Archer's was taking off: "He was very smart in the ring. He was very focused. He was a hard guy to outbox."

•Vinny Ferguson, who sparred countless rounds with Archer: "Joey was a terrific fighter. His hands were very, very fast, and he had a granite chin. He was a beautiful boxer."

Archer was a quintessential boxer who in the mid-1960s had a large following among New York City's Irish population. He was the Big Apple's version of Billy Conn. He nearly became the middleweight champion of the world, and there are many who will still argue that he should have been. But Archer isn't one of them. He leaves the past where it is and focuses on the present. You won't hear him complain about bad luck or poor decisions.

Today, Archer lives quietly in upstate New York, near the capital city of Albany. He ventures to New York City occasionally to visit family or to attend boxing functions. In December, he was at the Downtown Athletic Club for the Third Annual Boxers Luncheon. All the proceeds from the affair were going to help defray the medical costs incurred by the family of former lightweight contender Johnny Busso, who lost a battle to bone marrow cancer nine days after the luncheon.

Archer, 62, looked trim and not far off his fighting weight of 160 pounds. His good health and appearance can be attributed to a walking regimen that reaches 10

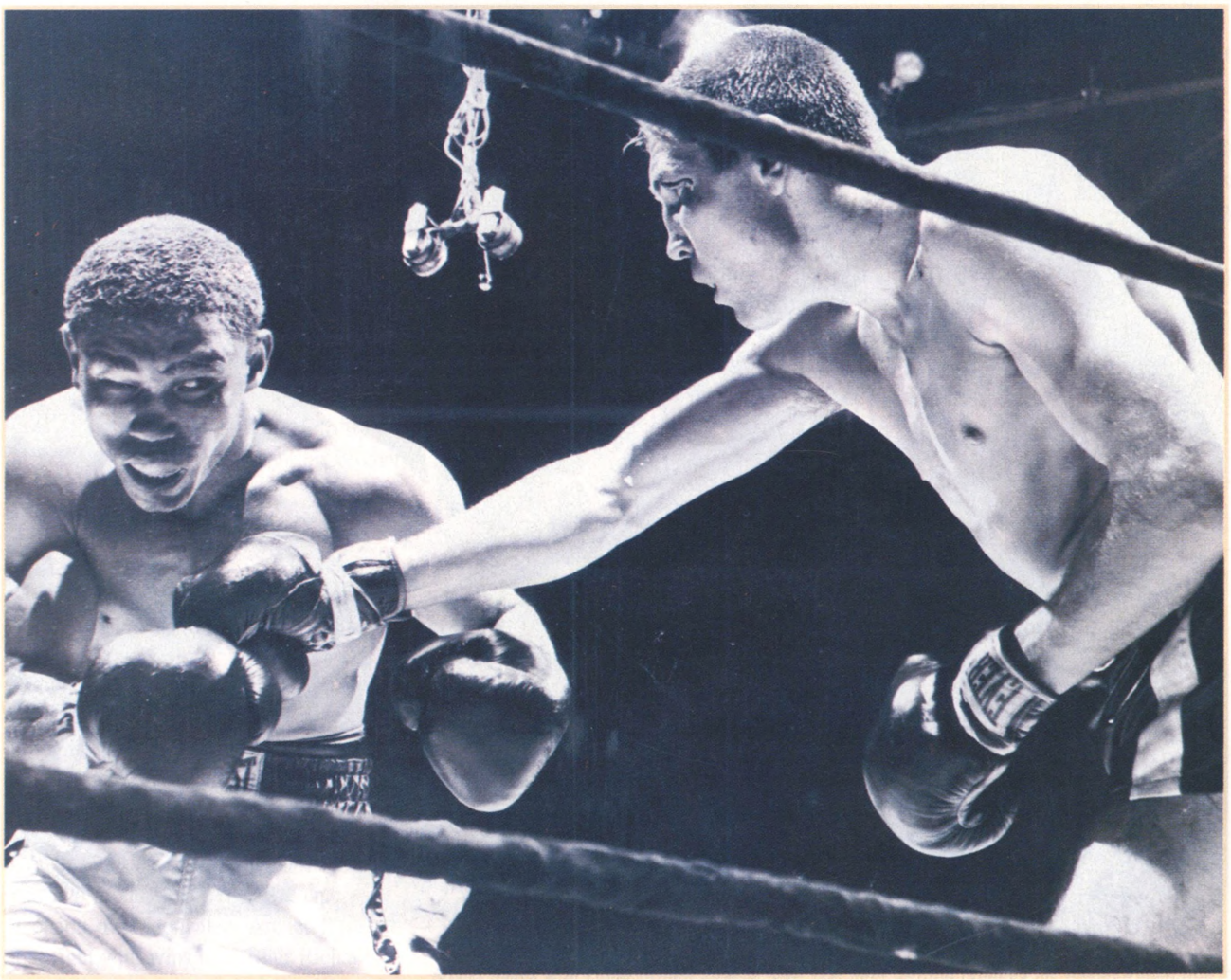
PHOTO BY ROBERT CASSIDY

Joey (right) and brother Jimmy share a smile at the Third Annual Boxers Luncheon at the Downtown Athletic Club in New York City. Jimmy served as Joey's manager during his boxing days.

miles per day. At the luncheon, he moved among the fighters in the Heisman Room with an unassuming dignity that seemed to set him apart. In New York, he's boxing royalty, but without any pretensions. Archer was surrounded by friends and contemporaries, and his perpetual smile told you that he was back where he belonged.

Archer, raised in the Bronx, turned pro in 1956 and was managed by his brother Jimmy, who was three years his senior. Who better to look out for Archer in the cutthroat business of boxing than Jimmy? He'd boxed main events at the Garden, fought in pre-Castro Cuba, and managed to free himself from a pro contract with Blinky Palermo. Jimmy knew the game and he knew how to make the ride a little less bumpy for his younger brother.

"I had a good manager," said Joey of his brother. "If you don't have a good



Archer jolts a lumpy-looking Jose Gonzalez en route to a unanimous decision victory at Madison Square Garden in 1962. It was sweet revenge for Archer, who had suffered his first pro loss to the rugged Puerto Rican in their first match.

Yankee outfielder Roger Maris tests Archer's chin with a Louisville Slugger in a publicity shot from the 1960s. Archer was extremely popular with New York City's Irish-American boxing fans.

manager, they'll ruin you in this sport."

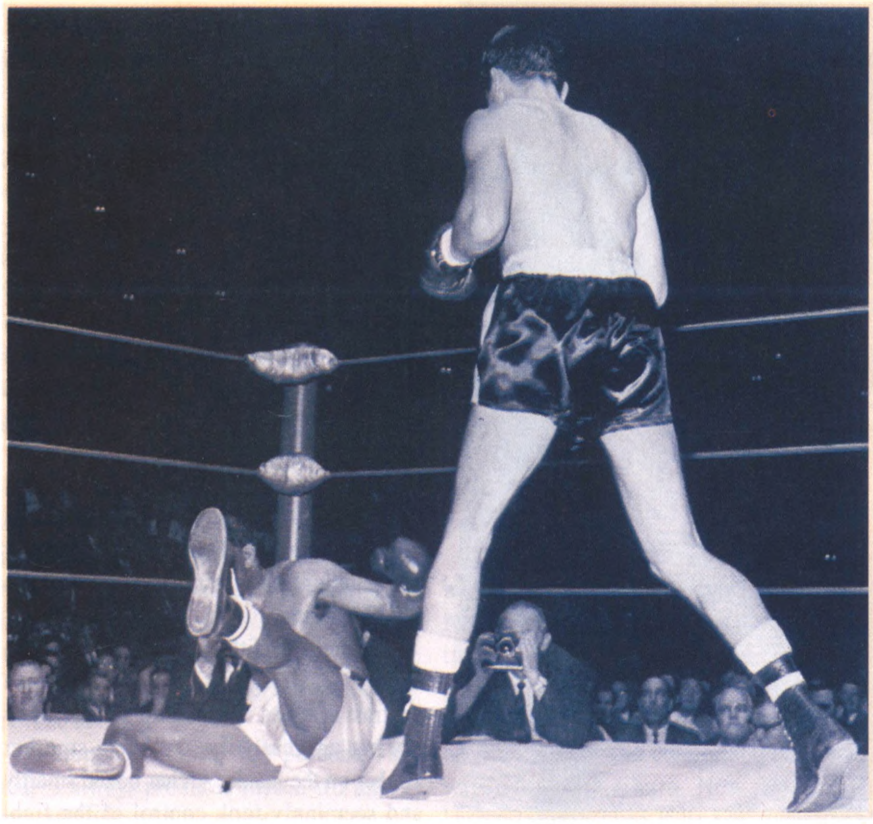
No one could ruin Joey Archer; he was that good.

At 15, Archer began training at Gleason's Gym when it was still located in the Bronx. He learned the game by watching fighters like Jake LaMotta, Sandy Saddler, Busso, and Dennis Pat Brady, who would later become Archer's trainer.

"I watched every fighter," said Archer. "That was my foundation for learning. I started out in a pro gym and I would watch sometimes for two hours before working out. Even at 15, all my boxing was with pros. They'd work with me. They didn't take advantage of me. I sparred with guys like Tiger Jones, Larry Baker, Orlando Zulueta, Jimmy Carter. That's how I learned. Then I'd go home and try to practice a move I saw in the gym and put it into my repertoire."

Preparation was essential to Archer's success. He trained diligently, conditioning

Future Hall of Famer Dick Tiger finds defensive wizard Archer a small target in their 1964 bout. Archer won a 10-round decision, but it was Tiger who got the next title shot. Archer had to wait until July '66 to get a crack at the title.



Archer had the dubious distinction of retiring the great Sugar Ray Robinson, knocking him down en route to a unanimous decision. Some felt Archer carried Robinson out of respect.

himself to fight as hard in the 10th round as he did in the first. And, of course, there was the mental preparation.

"I always had a fight plan," said Archer. "I lived the fight for about a month. I had the fight already fought in my mind for at least a month before I stepped into the ring."

Initially, he fought exclusively on Jimmy's undercards, and won his first 18 bouts. When it became difficult to match him in New York, Jimmy sent his brother to Texas for more experience. He trained at the Auditorium Gym in Houston and always made time to study the gym's top pros—Joe Brown, Cleveland Williams, and Roy Harris.

He campaigned in Texas and Louisiana from November 1958 to June '60, running his record to 30-0. He returned to New York and beat Don Fullmer in 1961, but then a knee injury sidelined Archer for 16 months. He wasn't fully recovered when he came back in '62 and lost to Jose Gonzalez. But he insisted on a rematch, and two months later scored a unanimous decision over Gonzalez. Archer followed that fight with wins over Blair Richardson and Denny Moyer, and planted himself firmly in the division's top 10. Teddy Brenner, the Garden's matchmaker, called for a meeting with Jimmy Archer.

"I sat down with Teddy Brenner," said Jimmy, "and he told me the four middleweights the Garden wanted to match were Joey Archer, Hurricane Carter, Joey Giardello, and Dick Tiger, who was the champion. It was supposed to be like a tournament."

In October of 1963, Archer defeated Carter at Madison Square Garden. Two months later, Giardello defeated Tiger to win the middleweight crown. His first defense should have been against Archer. It wasn't. Giardello fought Carter and retained the title with a 15-round decision.

Archer opened the 1964 campaign with a win over Holly Mims and closed out the year by decisioning Tiger at the Garden. Again, he should have fought Giardello for the title. But Giardello balked, and instead opted for a rematch with Tiger.

Tiger dethroned Giardello in 1965. Tiger's next fight? Not against Archer. He met welterweight champion Emile Griffith instead, and lost the crown. Archer was so disgusted that he agreed to fight Jose Torres for the light heavyweight title. But the New York State Athletic Commission refused to sanction the fight, arguing that Archer was not a light heavyweight.

"But Griffith, who was a welterweight, got to fight Tiger," said Archer, still puzzled by the ruling.

Frustrated in his hometown, Archer traveled to Pittsburgh and, on November 10, 1965, fought the once-great Sugar Ray Robinson.

"I figured if he beat Ray Robinson,

Archer poses with Emile Griffith prior to their first fight. Griffith retained the middleweight title in extremely close bouts both times they fought. Following their second bout, Archer quit boxing at the age of 28, disgusted with the politics that ruled the sport.

Older brother Jimmy (right) tried to lure Joey out of retirement in 1969 by making a comeback of his own. But the younger brother was fed up with boxing politics and stayed retired.

Joey would finally get a title shot," said Jimmy. "Robinson was old, but he was still winning. He won four straight coming into that fight. I was nervous. Robinson could pull things out of the wind. I had seen this great fighter do it so many times. I saw him knock Gene Fullmer dead in the Garden. Robinson would never say die. I was more nervous than Joey before the fight. Joey just said to me, 'Will you relax, nothing is going to happen.'"

It was a fight to keep Archer busy, but one that he approached with ambivalence. He quickly demonstrated to Robinson that it was indeed time to retire. He dropped him in the fourth round and cruised to a 10-round points win. It was Robinson's last fight.

"I felt bad," said Joey. "I felt he shouldn't be in the ring. Probably for the five years before he fought me, he shouldn't have been in the ring. The comeback wasn't a good idea. Fighters stay on too long. Robinson was a great fighter. To watch someone like that go into the ring and do badly, I felt very bad about that. It was the same thing watching Muhammad Ali at the end. I don't think I really did a full job against Robinson."

Archer was asked if he held back, or carried the great Robinson after dropping him in the fourth round.

"He was a great fighter," said Archer. "Let's just leave it at that."

Archer was remembered primarily for his boxing ability, but it's a mistake to classify him as a hit-and-run artist. While he lacked knockout power, he didn't lack heart. He was popular in New York because he fought with a toughness that the blue collar boxing fan appreciated.

"When Joey got hit, he stayed in front of you and fought," said Jimmy. "He wouldn't run. There was no dog in Joey Archer. What made him look so good was when he got in those tradeoffs, he'd always win them because he had fast hands. I remember the first tradeoff with Hurricane Carter. I said, man, this guy is a big puncher. But Joey stood right there, took his punch, and then nailed him with three or four punches."

It is ironic that Archer finally got his title shot after a 12-round loss to Don Fullmer later in '65. But Archer wasn't complaining; he was ready. He had been for a long time.

He met Griffith on July 13, 1966, in front of 13,776 at MSG, and the bout was a contrast in styles. The champion opened by boxing aggressively, trying to smother Archer on the inside. Archer boxed smartly and seemingly took control of the fight after a slow start. It wasn't enough in the eyes of the judges, who awarded Griffith a majority decision by the scores of 7-7-1, 9-5-1 and 8-7 in rounds.

"Joey won the first fight, no ifs, ands, or buts," said brother Jimmy. "The fans thought he won the fight. They booed, but Joey didn't get the decision."

They met again at the Garden on January 23, 1967, drawing an even larger crowd of 14,838. But after 15 rounds of textbook boxing, Griffith was again awarded a close, but unanimous, decision by scores of 8-7 and 8-6-1 (twice). Both verdicts have been disputed by Archer loyalists.

"They were very close fights for the first eight or nine rounds," said Clancy. "Then Emile pulled them out. But Joey was difficult to hit and he had the kind of style that made you look bad. He could compete with anyone in the division at the time."

After the second fight, Archer stopped competing. He walked away from the sport he mastered, leaving the game with a 45-4 (8) record. When asked about the Griffith fights, Archer paused for a moment, carefully plotting his words and perhaps subduing the pain.

"It hurt," said Archer. "I thought I won both fights. But he was a great fighter and he's a nice person. Today, it doesn't mean anything."

Archer will leave it to others to second-guess history.

"You will never get Joey to say a bad word about anybody," said his cousin Kevin Archer at the Downtown A.C. "To me, he was the middleweight champion of the world. He won't say that, but I will. He won both of those fights."

Archer may not have been a champion on paper, but at the age of 28 he was still in championship form. Yet he refused to continue his career, hurt more by the politics than the punches.

"He retired with a lot left in him," said Ferguson. "He still had a lot of ability. But he told me that after the second Griffith fight he started going through the motions in the gym. In boxing, you can't go through the motions. That's when you get hurt."

Archer's heart was no longer in the sport he loved.

"I stopped training 100 percent," he said. "I always promised myself if I didn't train 100 percent I'd get out. That's how I felt. Today maybe it would be a little different because there's so much money around."

There was talk of a fight against Nino Benvenuti, who later dethroned Griffith. Archer expressed interest, but the Benvenuti camp wanted him to fight a few tuneups. He refused, feeling he could go straight to the ring and beat Benvenuti.

In 1969, Jimmy Archer made a comeback and won three fights, hoping to entice Joey back to the gym. He never took the bait.

"Joey didn't want to be used," said Jimmy. "He would never let anyone do that to him."

After leaving the ring, Archer invested his earnings and purchased three taverns in New York City. He also was a member of the International Longshoreman's Association and worked on Manhattan's west side docks. Today, he is retired and he lives quietly and comfortably with his wife Joan in Latham, New York. He laughed when asked if he saw the movie *The Hurricane*, a bio-pic of Carter. He wouldn't see it because he heard about how inaccurately the Giardello-Carter fight was depicted.

"I was there, I saw that fight," said Archer. "Giardello won 10 of the 15 rounds."

Archer still watches all the big fights on television, and among the fighters he enjoys the most are Sugar Shane Mosley and Ricardo Lopez.

"He's disciplined and he doesn't make mistakes," said Archer of Lopez. "You can see he's always thinking. When he throws his punches, his hands are always up here *(puts hands up in fighting position)*. It's nothing fancy, but he's always sharp, always focused."

There isn't a hint of bitterness to Archer. When he says, "I always thought I'd be a champion, but life balances out," the smile on his face tells you that life has balanced out in Joey Archer's favor.

There's no disputing that verdict. ■

Robert Cassidy is a New York-based freelance writer and a former associate editor of this magazine.

SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Henry Akinwande KO 1 Kenny Craven
Vaughn Bean KO 2 Onebo Maxime
Maurice Harris W 8 Harold Sconiers
David Bostice W 10 Al Cole
Fres Oquendo KO 4 Willie Chapman
Sedreck Fields KO 2 John Dixon
Garing Lane KO 1 Tim Noble
Vincenzo Rossitto KO 7 Colin Abselon
Attila Levin KO 2 Russell Chasteen
Dominick Guinn W 4 Anthony Moore

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Juan Carlos Gomez KO 10 Jorge Castro
(Retains WBC Title)
Virgil Hill KO 1 Fabrice Tiozzo
(Wins WBA Title)
Bruce Scott KO 6 John Keeton
Mario Tonus KO 9 Massimiliano Saiani
Vincenzo Cantatore KO 1 Rogerio Lobo
Danny Santiago KO 8 Jerry Coleman
Vinson Durham W 10 Eric French
Tim Williamson KO 4 Tony Menefee

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Dariusz Michalczewski KO 7 Ka-dy King
Will Taylor W 10 Sammy Ahmad
Neil Simpson KO 4 Hasting Rasani
Jean-Mark Mormeck KO 3 Livin Castillo

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Sven Ottke W 12 Silvio Branco
(Retains IBF Title)
Davey Hilton W 12 Dingaan Thobela
(Wins WBC Title)
Joe Calzaghe KO 10 Richie Woodhall
Charles Brewer KO 1 Esteban Cervantes
Markus Beyer W 10 Ahmet Dine
Hassine Cherifi W 8 Lorant Szabo
Robin Reid KO 1 Mike Gormley
David Starie KO 3 Alex Mason
Mario Veit KO 3 Carl Cockerham
Reginaldo Andrade KO 3 Manuel Florian

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Carl Daniels W 12 Brian Barbosa
Tito Mendoza KO 3 Maselino Masoe
Ryan Rhodes W 6 Howard Clarke
Dwain Williams KO 1 Juan Soberanes
Lester Jacobs KO 3 David Baptiste
Lansana Diallo W 12
Sergey Tatevosyan
Jesse Brinkley KO 5
Kennedy McCullough

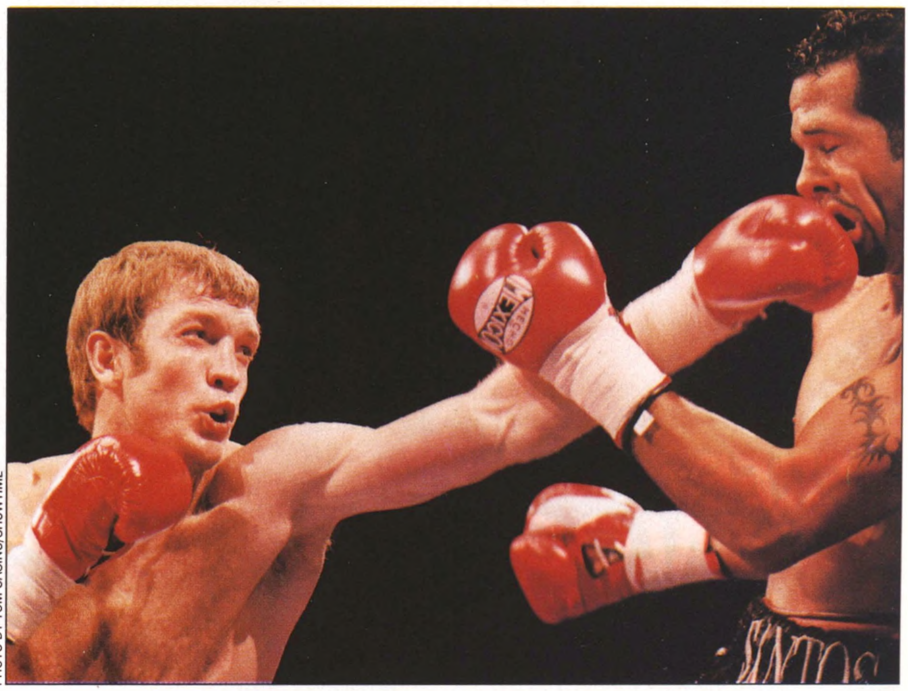


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Welterweight Neil Sinclair feeds Daniel Santos a jab

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Winky Wright W 12 Keith Mullings
Oba Carr KO 6 Agustin Caballero
Steve Martinez KO 5 Steve Mayo
Steve Roberts KO 7
Mohammed Hissani
Francisco Mora KO 9 Ariel Chaves
Kelly Pavlik KO 2 Cedric Johnson

WELTERWEIGHTS

Daniel Santos KO 2 Neil Sinclair
Cory Spinks W 10 Luis Tyson Vazquez
Antonio Margarito KO 4 Frankie Randall
Carlos Baldomir KO 1 Alpaslan Aguzum
Hercules Kyvelos W 10 Alex Hilton
Alejandro Jimenez KO 5 Ahmed Santos
Miguel Rodriguez KO 4
Leonard Townsend

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Ray Oliveira W 12 Vince Phillips
John Bailey W 10 Joel Perez
Carlos Vilches W 12 Victor Paz
Michael Stewart W 10 Patrick Thorns
Gianluca Branco W 6 Jacobs Abgbus
Mambea Bakari W 8 Miguel Figueroa
Richard Sierra W 8 Adam Leibowitz
Del Matchett W 8 Jesus Valverde
Demetrius Hopkins W 6 Jaime Palma

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Paul Spadafora W 12 Billy Irwin
(Retains IBF Title)
Acelino Freitas KO 1 Daniel Alicea
Alejandro Gonzalez KO 3
Adarryl Johnson
Leavander Johnson KO 4
Sean Fletcher
Stefano Zoff W 6 Sunday Aderoju
Bruno Wartelle KO 9 Ernest Koffi
Arnulfo Castillo KO 7 Freddy Neal
Alberto Sicurella W 8 Wilson Galli
Leonard Dorin KO 5 Darrelle Sukerow
Gary Balletto KO 4 Larry O'Shields

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Robbie Peden KO 7 Ivan Feliciano
Philip Ndou KO 10
Jose de Jesus Zatarain
Michael Gomez W 12 Ian McLeod
Lamont Pearson KO 12 Harold Warren
Carlos Hernandez KO 5
Reggie Sanders
Tiger Ari W 12 Atsushi Tamaki

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Mbulelo Botile KO 12 Paul Ingle
(Wins IBF Title)
Erik Morales KO 1 Rodney Jones
Julio Pablo Chacon KO 3 Sergio Liendo
Jorge Barrios W 12
Laureano Ramirez Padilla
Panther Yanagida W 12 Tony Wehbee
Bobby Velardez W 10 Daniel Rodriguez

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Carlos Contreras W 12 Vincenzo Gigliotti
Arnel Barotillo KO 3 Anderson Alegenio
Vuyani Phulo KO 5 Innocent Mthalane

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Veerapol Sahaprom KO 5
Oscar Arciniega
(Retains WBC Title)
Mauricio Martinez KO 1 Esham Pickering
Eidy Moya W 12
Saohin Sithchai Condo
Rafael Marquez KO 7 Guzman Aquilles
Johnny Armour W 12 Francis Ampofo
Jess Maca W 12
Katsushige Kawashima
Akihiro Kanai W 10 Cruz Carbajal

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Masamori Tokuyama W 12
Akihiko Nago
(Retains WBC Title)
Felix Machado KO 3 William de Souza
(Retains IBF Title)
Raul Juarez W 12 Jose Angel Beranza
Mbwana Matumla W 10 Edison Torres

FLYWEIGHTS

Eric Morel W 12 Gilberto Keb-Baas
(Retains WBA Title)
Alexander Munoz KO 5
Sornpichai Pisnurachank
Alejandro Montiel W 12 Jose Laureano
Fernando Montiel KO 8 Isidro Garcia
Alexander Mahmutov W 12
David Guerault
Jose Lopez KO 2 Gilberto Gonzalez

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Rosendo Alvarez KO 2 Cipriano Landa
Melchor Cob-Castro KO 9
Panchito Garcia

STRAWWEIGHTS

Keitaro Hoshino W 12 Joma Gamboa
(Wins WBA Title)

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2001

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RINGSIDE REPORTS

FIGHTER *of the* MONTH

He's the Fighter of the Year. His face is on the cover—for the second month in a row. It seems like you can't find a page in this magazine without his name on it. So maybe you're sick of Felix Trinidad by now. Maybe you were praying to see somebody else's picture on this page. But the fact of the matter is, to name anybody else the Fighter of the Month would be flat-out ridiculous.

Fernando Vargas was undefeated, he was ranked in nearly everybody's pound-for-pound top 10, yet Trinidad had an answer for everything he tried. Vargas had never been knocked down before, never even been badly wobbled, but the notion that his chin might be impenetrable was put to rest barely 20 seconds into the fight, when Trinidad reminded us all who has the best left hook in the game. Over the course of the next 11 highly compelling rounds, Vargas was dropped four more times, and by the time the fight was stopped midway through the 12th, Trinidad had shown us everything: speed, power, resilience, endurance, adaptability, smarts. It was his most complete, most impressive performance, and as easy a decision as it was to make Trinidad the Fighter of the Year, it was even more of a no-brainer to make him the Fighter of the Month.

• • • •

Felix Trinidad

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

Joppy blasts hopelessly outclassed Reid with a right

William Joppy KO 4 Jonathan Reid

Las Vegas, Nevada: WBA middleweight champ Joppy has his good nights (his third bout with Julio Cesar Green, his demolition of Hassine Cherifi) and his bad nights (the first fight with Green, the stinker against Fernando Zuniga). And then there are those nights when no matter what, even if he hadn't trained a lick and had to fight with his ankles tied together, he's gonna come out looking all right. His defense against hopeless late substitute Reid on the Felix Trinidad-Fernando Vargas undercard at Mandalay Bay was exactly such an occasion.

Reid, 160, Nashville, Tennessee, brought a 27-0 (16) record into the fight, but he'd faced nobody of stature—unless you count infamous trialhorse Reggie Strickland, whom he'd fought *twice*—and he was quickly exposed by the accomplished champion, who was making the fifth defense of his second title reign. Reid was dropping his left hand with regularity from the start, and Joppy, 159½, Silver Spring, Maryland, immediately began to zero in with his overhand right.

Joppy, knowing there was no danger, became very aggressive in round two, and "Reid Dawg" practically stopped throwing punches. Joppy, 30, scored with a huge right midway through the third, and after catching eight followup punches along the ropes, Reid, 28, finally took a knee. Referee Joe Cortez (USA) came close to stopping it several times after that, but resisted the urge, and Reid made it out of the round. In the fourth, Joppy hurt the challenger with a left, a right, and a right to the body, and he began waving the ref in to take a closer look. A perfect right-left-right combination finally dropped Reid along the ropes, and Cortez halted the fight without a count at the 2:43 mark.

"What I wanted to do," said Joppy, 32-1-1 (24), "is show Trinidad and [Bernard] Hopkins that I'm the best in the division." Unfortunately for Joppy, it was impossible to prove such a thing against an opponent like Reid. But he should be getting his chance to prove it against Trinidad, as a spring showdown is looking likely. Suffice to say, Joppy will need to have a *very* good night to beat "Tito."

Television: TVKO

Promoters: Don King Productions, Main Events

(12-2-00)

Eric Raskin

Ricardo Lopez KO 3 Ratanapol Vorapin

Las Vegas, Nevada: The legendary Lopez' IBF junior flyweight title defense on the Trinidad-Vargas undercard wasn't about real competition. If it had been, surely they wouldn't have selected an opponent who had lost three of his last seven fights, two by knockout. This was simply about ending Lopez' career-long 14-month layoff, picking up his first defense of the 108-

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

Ref Steele halts the one-sided Lopez-Vorapin bout

pound belt, enabling him to equal Rocky Marciano's mark of 49 wins without a loss (though that one technical-decision draw sure is aesthetically displeasing), and trying to do so without "El Finito's" tender skin ripping open.

Mission accomplished, on all fronts. Faded former IBF minimumweight champ Vorapin, 107½, Thailand, brought his brittle chin and little else, and Lopez, 107½, Mexico, started teeing off early. Late in the first round, a right-left combination knocked Vorapin off-balance, though he quickly righted himself and smiled at the champ. Toward the end of the second, it was a left uppercut from Lopez that caused Vorapin to stumble, but again he recovered quickly, and the two engaged in a decent exchange just before the bell.

After an unusually sportsmanlike start to round three, with Lopez and Vorapin repeatedly breaking on their own while referee Richard Steele (USA) was able to just stand back and watch, Vorapin suddenly turned aggressive, and Lopez capitalized. Lopez scored with a left to the body, then hurt Vorapin, 27, with another left uppercut. A straight right by the 33-year-old champion caused Vorapin to stagger into the ropes, where Lopez followed up with a series of left uppercuts and straight rights until, with Vorapin, 38-6-1 (30), not punching back at all, Steele stopped it at the 2:11 mark.

Lopez, 49-0-1 (36), though perhaps a hair slower than he was at his peak, still gave every indication that he is the best fighter at flyweight or below. And though retirement rumors had been rampant during his lengthy hiatus, he suggested after the fight that his exceptional career will go on for the time being.

Television: TVKO

Promoters: Don King Productions, Main Events

(12-2-00)

Eric Raskin

Masamori Tokuyama W 12 Akihiko Nago

Osaka, Japan: Slick-punching speedster Tokuyama, 115, a North Korean residing in Japan, made his first defense of the WBC super flyweight title as he dropped hard-punching lefty Nago, 114¾, with a hook in the third, overcame his own visit to the canvas in the sixth, and won a lopsided decision over 12 rounds. American judge James Jen-Kin scored it 118-108 for Tokuyama, while both of the Japanese judges, Kazumasa Kuwata and Nobuaki Uratani, had it 117-109 for the defending champ.

It was a one-sided fight, as Tokuyama, 26, aggressive with his hooks and jabs, swept almost all rounds but the sixth, when the champ received a southpaw left that dropped him on the seat of his trunks. But that was the only time Nago, 24, showed some of what he was expected to do in front of the crowd of 5,000 at Maishima Arena. In short, Nago was really a disappointment—just as he was when he was defeated by Hideki Todaka for the WBA version of the 115-pound title in November '99. He seldom threw punches aggressively, and seemed to have left his fighting spirit in his native Okinawa.

With the win, Tokuyama's record now reads 23-2-1 (5), while Nago falls to 17-2 (11).

(12-12-00)

Joe Koizumi

Steve Forbes KO 8 John Brown

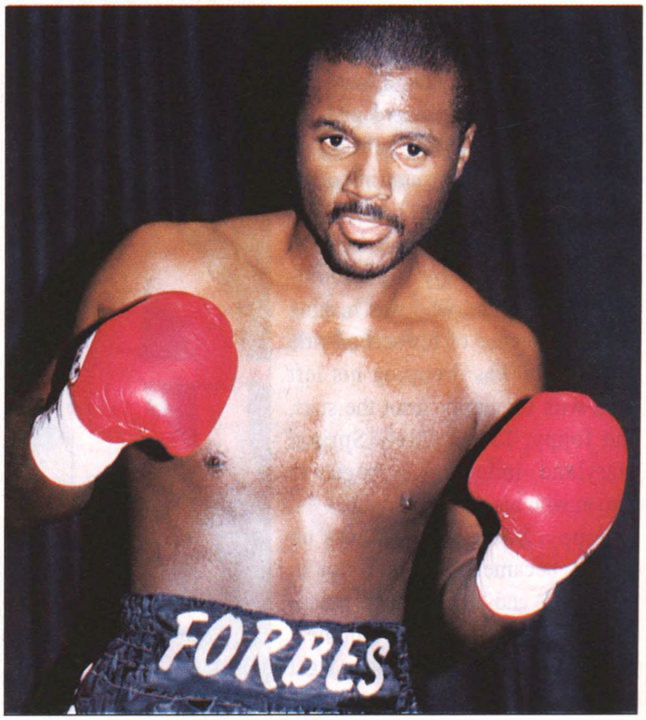
Miami, Florida: "The Eastern Beast" was hoping that his third shot at an IBF title would be a charm. Brown, 130, Atlantic City, New Jersey, had failed in his previous two attempts, losing to Shane Mosley in April 1999 and to Diego Corrales eight months later.

This title fight at Miccusukee Indian Gaming was somewhat ironic in that Brown and Forbes, two guys who couldn't knock the hat off a man's head, were vying for the title vacated by the murderous-punching Corrales. And few would have predicted that the bout would end in a stoppage for either the number-one rated Brown or the number-two ranked Forbes.

Brown's game plan was a familiar one, as he pressured the taller Forbes from the opening bell. Brown, 22-8 (10), eluded Forbes' jab, bulled his way inside, and pounded Forbes' midsection with vicious left hooks. Forbes, 19-1 (5), captured the second and third stanzas with crisp combinations that repeatedly caught Brown coming in. But the 32-year-old Brown refused to deviate from his aggressive strategy; he bloodied Forbes' nose and won round four with effective counterpunching.

Forbes, 130, Las Vegas, Nevada, altered his strategy to capitalize on Brown's straight-ahead offense. When Brown kept his head pressed against Forbes' chest, the Oregon native cracked Brown with uppercuts. Adding to Forbes' offensive success in round six was the fact that when Brown did get inside, he threw little and scored even less. Round seven was close, but Brown's aggression won him the frame on all three official scorecards.

In round eight, Brown continued boring in, and with less than a minute remaining in the round, Forbes cracked a right hand against Brown's head, opening a cut on the inside of the left ear. A second right widened the gash, sending blood spurting down Brown's neck and shoulder. Referee Jorge Alonso (USA) halted the action and summoned ringside physician Dr. Stanley



Slick Forbes claimed the vacant title against Brown

Simpson to examine the wound. Alonso stopped the bout seconds later, at the 2:22 mark, after Simpson informed him that the blood flow could not be stopped short of stitching the cut closed. The doctor was also concerned that Brown may have sustained a perforated ear drum.

Brown was understandably crestfallen, while Forbes, 23, was ecstatic. "I feel like a champ," he said. "I just wanted to box, but he was a lot rougher than I expected. He also surprised me because he was a lot faster than I thought he was."

As for the cut that ended the bout, Forbes said, "When I landed the first punch, I heard a 'pop' sound and didn't feel he'd be able to continue. I put all my weight into that shot."

Television: FOX SportsNet

Promoter: America Presents

(12-3-00)

Ken Knox

Keitaro Hoshino W 12 Joma Gamboa

Tokyo, Japan: In a minor upset, Hoshino, 105, captured the WBA minimumweight title as he gained a close but unanimous decision over Filipino Gamboa, 104¾.

The scoring was as follows: Wansoo Yuh (Korea) had it 117-112, and Hiroyuki Tezaki (Japan) and Takeo Harada (Japan) both saw it 115-113, all for Hoshino, 21-6 (5). Gamboa, who had dethroned Noel Arambulet of Venezuela in Tokyo last August, fell to 29-6-1 (20).

Gamboa, 27, making his first title defense, looked sluggish from the start, scoring only with occasional single shots. Hoshino remained aggressive all the way and held off Gamboa when the champion tried to mount a rally over the final four rounds.

The 31-year-old Hoshino became the oldest boxer out of Japan to win a world title in his first shot.

Promoter: Susumu Hanagata's Hanagata Promotions in association with Akihiko Honda's Teiken Promotions

(12-6-00)

Joe Koizumi

Marco Antonio Barrera KO 6 Jesus Salud

Las Vegas, Nevada: Honolulu native Salud entered the ring at the Venetian Resort Hotel-Casino for his fight with Barrera to the old *Hawaii Five-O* theme song, which was fitting because, through five rounds, that was precisely the score in favor of Barrera. And after one more terribly one-sided round, Salud's corner wisely elected to halt the fight, giving Barrera the TKO victory in his final tuneup before challenging Prince Naseem Hamed.

Though there's no denying that 37-year-old former WBA junior feather champ Salud was there to make Barrera look good, credit must be given to the Mexican, who looked more than just good dismantling his foe. It took Barrera, 122, less than a minute to make Salud, 122, wince from a hook to the body, and Barrera simply took his time and broke Salud down from there. Barrera worked his way inside off an unusually busy jab, and once in range, smothered Salud with pressure, making it nearly impossible for the Hawaiian to get off. Salud's face was reddening by the second round, and though Salud had few good moments in the third, backing Barrera up and scoring with uppercuts, the Barrera body attack was soon kicked into high gear, and Salud had no answers.

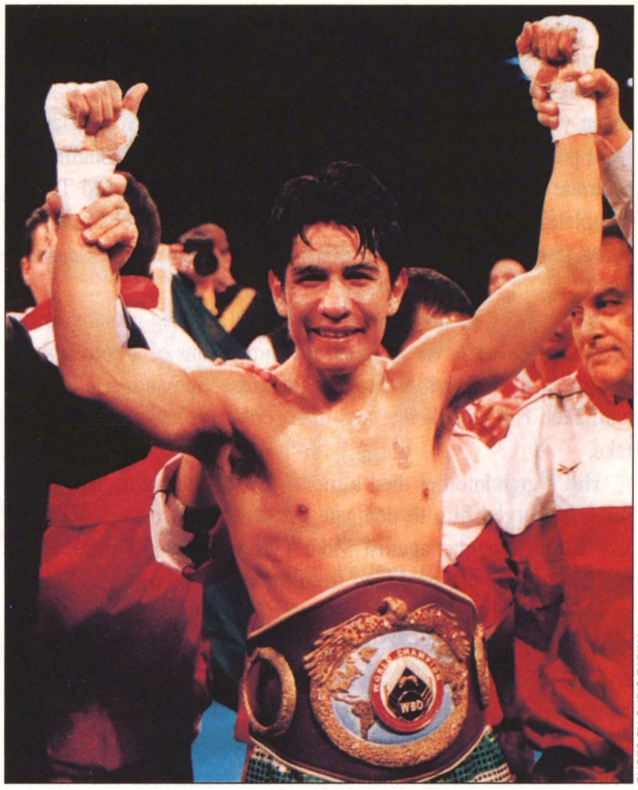


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Barrera celebrates easy TKO of Salud

As a result of the constant jabbing by Barrera, Salud's eyes were swelling noticeably by round five, and the 26-year-old Mexican proceeded to unload combination after combination against his purely defensive opponent. Barrera scored with a vicious right to the body in the sixth, then a right and a left to the midsection after pinning Salud, 62-10 (37), in a corner. There were hardly any punches coming at Barrera in return, and Salud's corner did the right thing, indicating to referee Joe Cortez (USA) after the round that they had seen enough.

"My corner told me to look for the knockout," Barrera, 52-3 (38), said, "but also to take it easy because this was a sure win."

Television: HBO

Promoter: Banner Promotions

(12-1-00)

Eric Raskin

Veerapol Sahaprom KO 5 Oscar Arciniega

Bangkok, Thailand: Fighting on his home soil, Sahaprom retained the WBC bantamweight title with ease, stopping the bloodied Arciniega in the fifth round. It was Sahaprom's fifth successful defense since knocking Joichiro Tatsuyoshi in Japan in December '98.

Sahaprom, 28-1 (20), was in complete control from the second round on, and capped his fine performance at Sanam Luang Field by opening a cut above the left eye of Arciniega, 31-15-2 (19), with a punch early in the fifth round. Referee David Chung (South Korea) sent the badly lacerated Mexican to the ring doctor, and the fight was stopped at the 1:55 mark.

(12-5-00)

Virgil Hill KO 1 Fabrice Tiozzo

Villeurbanne, France: Neither a 19-month layoff nor odds of 15-1 against him repeating his defeat of Tiozzo, 190, France, seven years earlier prevented Hill, 189, Bismarck, North Dakota, from pulling off a major upset at the Astroballe. Devastating and accurate combinations in the opening round dismantled Tiozzo completely and made Hill the WBA cruiserweight champion 13 years after he first won the WBA light heavyweight title and a month shy of his 37th birthday.

Slovenly in his preparation, Tiozzo, 31, looked ominously out of shape. He has never assumed the dimensions of a bodybuilder, but the lack of definition around his midsection suggested he too had taken Hill's challenge less than seriously. It was a huge mistake.

Hill's grandmother died a month before the fight, and family members urged him to dedicate his performance to her. Rather like Buster Douglas against Mike Tyson a decade before, Hill's motivation was personal, and from the outset he resolved himself to a winning effort.

Sharp jabs by Hill clearly surprised Tiozzo with their accuracy, and the champion, making his fifth defense, was seemingly incapable of defending himself against them. With a minute remaining in the first round, Hill unleashed a right that struck the Frenchman solidly on the jaw, a tremor in his legs revealing its shock to his system. Two more jabs and another hard right cross put Tiozzo down, and Hill had the winning of it earlier than even he could have imagined.

Years of ring experience helped Hill to remain cool, but he was determined not to miss his chance. After Puerto Rican referee Luis Pabon completed the mandatory eight-count, Hill tore in with a series of blows before a left hook sent Tiozzo reeling, and the Frenchman was issued another count with only the ropes keeping him up. Tiozzo tried his best to cover up when the action resumed, but Hill was relentless. Another big right knocked Tiozzo into a corner and a left hook to the body doubled him over, another right landing for good measure. As the overwhelmed champion collapsed to the canvas, the official signalled the fight over without a count at the 2:59 mark, and Hill, 46-3 (22), celebrated passionately.

"I knew I could do it even though everyone wrote me off. I had the belief in myself," Hill said.

Tiozzo, 42-2 (28), responded: "I didn't see the right hand. It surprised me. From that point, my balance was gone and I was just there taking punches."

Hill remains the only man ever to beat him.

Television: Showtime

Promoter: Don King Productions

(12-9-00)

Brian Doogan

Charles Brewer KO 1 Esteban Cervates

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Brewer, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was not about to let the 30-year-old Cervantes, West Palm Beach, Florida, come into his backyard and upstage him. Brewer, 167½, the former IBF super middleweight champion, was coming off a controversial split-decision loss to Sven Ottke, and felt something emphatic was needed in front of a boisterous hometown crowd at the legendary Blue Horizon.

Brewer, 31, received the perfect foil in Cervantes, 23-4-2 (16), who came out attacking, throwing bombs at Brewer, 36-7 (26), in the opening seconds of the bout. One Brewer left hook stopped the charging Cervantes, 167, and severely hurt him. Now on the offensive, Brewer quickly closed in on the vulnerable Cervantes and slammed home several bodyshots, then a right hand that dropped the underdog. Cervantes got up and tried to punch back, but Brewer soon scored with an overhand right, followed by another left hook that left Cervantes crumbling in the corner. Referee Rudy Battle (USA) immediately stepped in and called a halt to the bout at the 2:06 mark.

The first-round knockout was only the fourth in Brewer's career and his first since November 23, 1993, when "The Hatchet" made quick work of Mario Munoz, also at the Blue Horizon.

"That explosiveness always existed in me," Brewer said. "I had a feeling Cervantes was going for the kill, with this fight being in Philly. I felt I had to do something big, get a knockout like this to get back into the ratings again."

Television: ESPN2

Promoter: Peltz Boxing Promotions

(12-8-00)

Joe Santoliquito ■

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Hill demolishes Tiozzo to win cruiser crown

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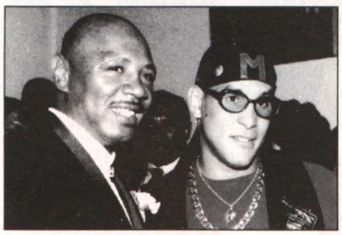

Stars . . . Marvelous Marvin Hagler and Hector "Macho" Camacho pose for reception guests, while Carlos Ortiz (r) makes the rounds.

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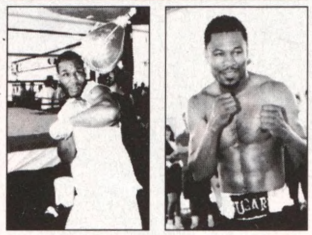

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David Reid

(Continued from page 67)

For now, though, the reality is this: David Reid, "The American Dream," is a confused 27-year-old whose swift ascent to boxing's summit only serves to illustrate how difficult it is to remain king of the mountain, and how far a fall he faces if he takes another treacherous misstep.

Reid's stature as a luminous star on the rise might not have suffered too badly as a result of his one-sided unanimous decision defeat to Felix Trinidad, in which he relinquished the WBA super welterweight title. A night spent in Trinidad's gunsights can do that to a lot of fighters, as Fernando Vargas recently discovered. But Reid's next ring appearance, a hotly disputed points nod over the gritty but hardly awesome Mexican veteran, Kirino Garcia, has made for a boiling cauldron of self-doubt, filled with bitter recriminations. It is one thing to be pummeled by someone who might be the best pound-for-pound fighter on the planet; it is another to stagger through the 10th round, barely holding on, against a 30-1 underdog who had had 20 previous defeats.

Might Reid, 15-1 (7), not really be as talented as he always had believed himself to be? Had he been brought along too fast? Is his body a malfunctioning machine? Is his droopy left eyelid always going to be his Achilles' heel? And what of the longtime mentor who has advised him to sprint to stardom while others, no gold medals in their bank vaults, got there by starting out in a jog before building up speed?

Reid is considering his options, but the most stunning development is that he apparently has come to the conclusion that Al Mitchell, the surrogate dad who introduced him to boxing at age 11 and later served as his Olympic coach, has to answer for questions in tests Reid clearly was not prepared to ace.

Three weeks after Garcia made him look almost ordinary in their November 26 bout in Las Vegas, Reid, his confidence badly shaken, was pondering Mitchell's role as Yoda to his Luke Skywalker.

"Al's in my corner as of now," Reid said when asked if Mitchell would remain as his principal cornerman. "I haven't made any decisions yet, but we have a lot to talk about. I'm not sure he's going to continue to be my coach."

Terse officials with Reid's promotional company, America Presents, said Reid would undergo thorough physical testing after the Christmas holidays, at which point he would make a decision as to his professional future and who would be a part of it. That future could find Mitchell continuing to call the shots, or perhaps it could have him accepting a reduced or secondary role. It also could mean an end to a 16-year relationship that always has been characterized as one of boxing's most touching and enduring unions.

On June 16, 1999, in the weeks leading up to his title defense against Australia's Kevin Kelly, Reid paid tribute to Mitchell by presenting his championship belt to him for Father's Day.

"Our relationship goes far beyond that of a fighter and a manager-trainer," Reid said at the time. "Al tells me all the rights and the wrongs and the do's and the don'ts. It's been that way since I was a little kid. Al taught me to be a humble person, how to conduct myself the right way, the importance of going to school. I want to pass those things on to my own son."

Eighteen months later, what could have happened to cause such a rift?

Mitchell, in Houston to work with welterweight contender and onetime Olympian Vernon Forrest, said he didn't believe he and Reid had passed a point of no return.

"That doesn't sound like Dave," Mitchell, who hadn't spoken to Reid in almost two weeks, said when advised of Reid's comments. "But there's a million people always telling him different things. Everybody's pulling at him.

"Dave's been with me since he was a kid. Everything I did was for him. And everything I did was right. I've looked at the tapes and I haven't made a bad call yet.

"We still yell at each other and hug each other as always. But if [Reid hiring another trainer] is what he wants, that's okay. I'm not a guy who tries to soft-soap a fighter just to stay on the payroll. I come right out and tell Dave when he does something wrong. The last three or four fights, we've been disagreeing on a lot of

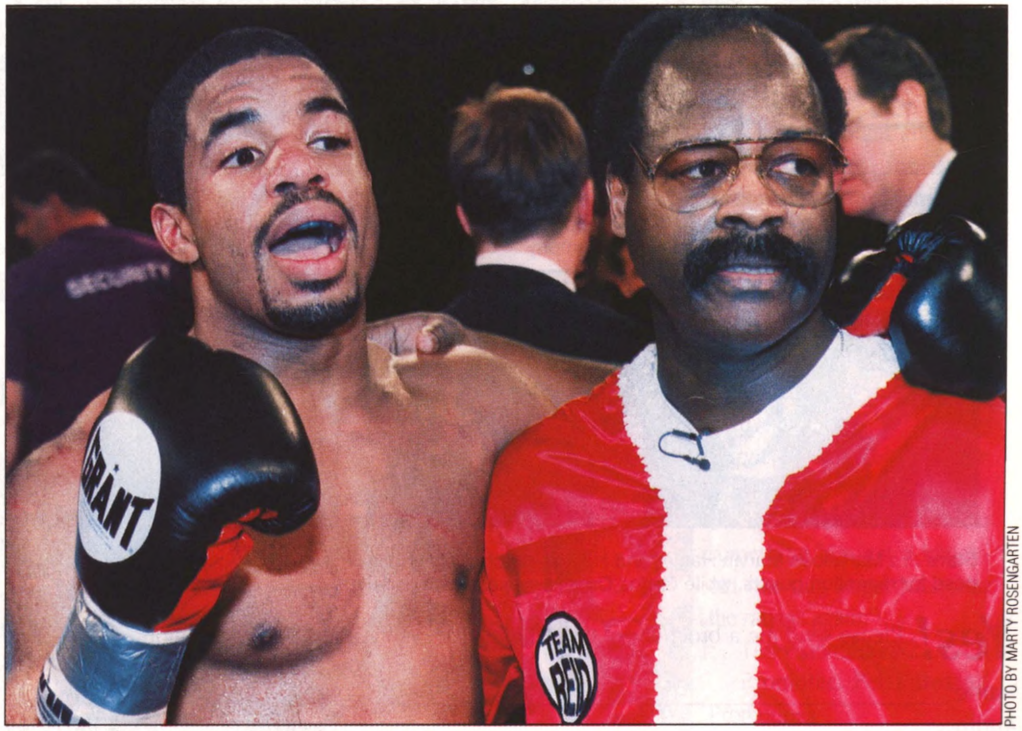


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

End of a relationship? Reid and trainer/father figure/Olympic coach Al Mitchell have been together since Reid was a young boy. Now there's a possibility that the pair will go their separate ways.

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Reid hits the floor against 30-1 underdog Kirino Garcia in his middleweight debut. Reid's first start since losing to Felix Trinidad resulted in an unpopular decision victory.

things, and he's not been listening in the corner. Dave is one of the most talented fighters out there, but at the elite level, you have to have a game plan and be able to execute it."

Those who caught the Fox SportsNet telecast of Reid's much-tougher-than-anticipated decision over Garcia had to notice that he scarcely paid attention to Mitchell's between-rounds instructions, and that he sometimes appeared to do the opposite of what Mitchell had told him to do.

Some fighters, of course, have been known to change trainers as if they were diapers. Former IBF junior middleweight champion Darrin Van Horn was notorious for the machine-gun rate at which he hired and fired trainers, and De La Hoya hands out pink slips at a similarly prodigious rate.

If Reid cans Mitchell, his new chief second could be Philly trainer Fred Jenkins—who, along with Marvin Garris, does much of the advance work with Reid before Mitchell, who now lives in Marquette, Michigan, comes aboard—or a big-name fix-it man. There would be no shortage of candidates volunteering for the assignment.

Whoever gets the gig, however, will be charged with the responsibility of restoring lost luster to Reid's image, which has been tarnishing almost from the time he captured the WBA 154-pound crown on March 6, 1999, by outpointing veteran Frenchman Laurent Boudouani in Atlantic City. Although he handled Boudouani with few problems, Reid got nailed with enough right hands that a temporary tooth was knocked out. Mitchell cited Reid's youth—he was then 25—as the reason why he had spent so much time trash-talking and not enough executing the fight plan.

"Dave has to understand this is a business, it's not a game," Mitchell said at the time. "If he keeps his mouth shut and his hands up, it'll be a party. He'll just march down the line against all these guys. I don't care who they bring. If they bring Mike Tyson, I'm happy."

Reid's mouth never quite closed, and his hands never quite stayed up, against a succession of gritty opponents who refused to go away quietly. Dating back to his final pre-Boudouani fight, against James "Cowboy" Coker, through his last bout before he faced Trinidad, against Keith Mullings, Reid was knocked down three times in a span of four outings while failing to register a single knockdown of his own.

With no knockout victories since his four-round starching of the well-faded Simon Brown on June 27, 1998, Reid expressed confidence he was ready to face the formidable challenge posed by long-time IBF welterweight king Trinidad, who was stepping up to 154 pounds.

"Knocking somebody out feels so good," he said. "It's like … I really don't know how to describe it. I guess you could say it's like hitting a home run. I haven't hit a home run in a while, and I want to enjoy that sensation again. I want to knock Felix Trinidad down and keep him there. Knocking him out will put me in such a good spot, man. It would answer so many questions."

Reid scored his knockdown of the oft-floored Trinidad, sending him to the canvas with an overhand right in the third round. But Trinidad, as is his wont, survived the scare and began to assert himself as the fight progressed. He shook Reid's world with a momentum-turning left hook in the seventh round, the first of four knockdowns—three came in the 11th round—that had the soon-to-be-dethroned champ desperately trying to survive until the final bell.

"Dave hasn't faced any lay-me-downs," Mitchell had said before the fight. "If he had, we wouldn't be ready to fight someone as good as Trinidad now."

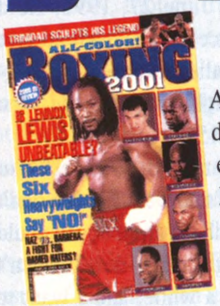
As it turned out, Reid wasn't as ready as he and Mitchell had figured. And Reid's tendency to fade from the middle rounds on, so dramatically underscored in the rout by Trinidad, had gone from a mild concern to a growing crisis.

America Presents President Dan Goossen's reaction was to send Reid to be evaluated by Mackie Shilstone, the renowned New Orleans-based conditioning expert who had helped bulk up Michael Spinks and slim down Riddick Bowe. Shilstone ran a number of tests on Reid and concluded that he had an internal thermostat that operated like an inefficient furnace. Too much heat and energy were being wasted, Shilstone concluded, the result of an uncommonly low body-fat content of 2.9 percent.

"The low body-fat content compro-

(Continued on page 92)

THIS MONTH IN BOXING 2001



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BOXING 2001

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David Reid

(Continued from page 91)

mised his immunity and didn't provide much cushioning for his organs," Shilstone said in the weeks leading up to Reid's middleweight debut against Garcia. "He was running out of gas because he was burning muscle instead of fat."

His stamina problem presumably solved by the move to middleweight and dietary supplements, Reid then set out to prove he was still the guy who had turned out the lights on Duvergel with a single bolt from the blue. And Garcia, despite a number-eight rating at 154 pounds from the WBC, seemed like the perfect person against whom to try out all Reid's new stuff; the Mexican had begun his pro career with 18 consecutive losses, including eight inside the distance, before he discovered the benefits of training.

Reid started out well enough, but he took a potentially calamitous two-point reduction when he was knocked down in the ninth round. He was on the canvas four times in all: In addition to the knockdown, he twice was tripped or pushed down, at least in the estimation of referee Tony Weeks, and he fell once after whiffing with a wild left hook.

The announcement of the decision—judges Paul Smith, Dave Moretti and Glenn Trowbridge had Reid ahead by margins of 96-93, 95-93, and 95-94, respectively—was greeted by catcalls.

"The first half of the fight, David was in total control," Goossen said. "Then all of a sudden the momentum shifted. We've seen it so often in the past.

"It's not as though he needs more experience. He knows what to do. He just has to do it. If David put together what he's capable of putting together, he would have knocked this guy out within six rounds. But we have to get that message through somehow. If you can do something halfway through, you should be able to do it all the way through."

"Garcia thought I was going to get tired in the later rounds," said Reid, who admitted, "I kind of petered out toward the end."

So where does Reid go from here? Into a proposed March 24 doubleheader on HBO in which he and Hopkins would be featured in separate bouts, a prelude to a summer meeting between them in Philadelphia? Or does he throttle back and take on a few of those "lay-me-downs" he missed on the way up, in order to restore his confidence? And will Mitchell be involved?

Stay tuned … ■

Bernard Fernandez covers boxing for the Philadelphia Daily News and is a regular contributor to this magazine.

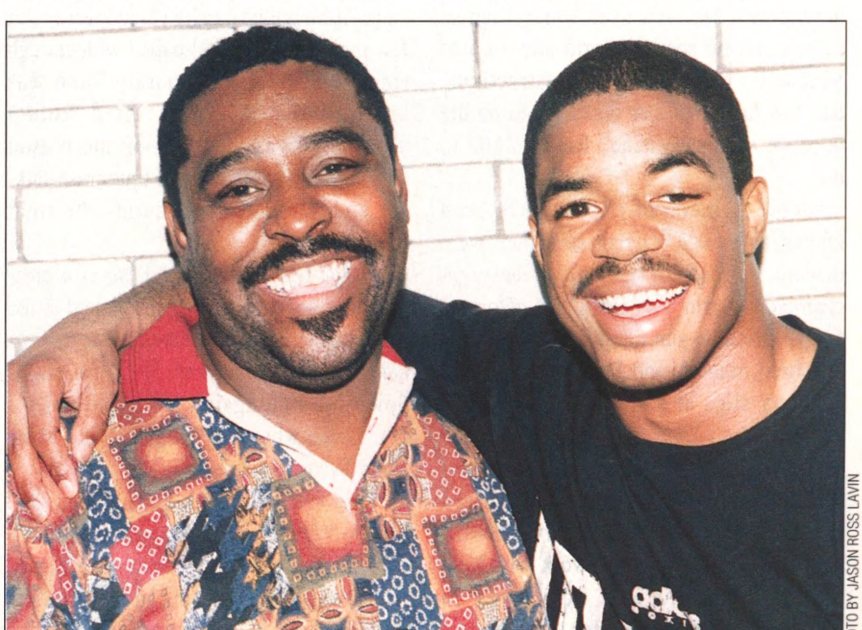

PHOTO BY JASON ROSS LAVIN

There has been speculation that assistant trainer Fred Jenkins might take over the top spot in Reid's corner. Others think a big-name trainer will be added to "The American Dream's" team, but no decision had been made as of press time.

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New Face

(Continued from page 16)

sive. I think Julio will be a world champion at some point. It's just a matter of making the right matches. The kid can punch, plus he has an organization like Top Rank behind him."

And three older brothers who helped raise young Julio, now 21, like a U.S. Marine: breaking him down, then building him up. Espinoza has known the brothers (Joel, Jesus, Antonio, Julio, and Arturo) since they were children. He would regularly take Joel and Jesus, the two oldest, to the gym with him, asking the Diaz patriarch, Anarbol, to permit the rambunctious Antonio and placid Julio to tag along. Anarbol finally relented, only after Espinoza caught the impromptu fight between Antonio and Julio on the front lawn.

"I was dropping off Jesus and Joel, when I got out of the car and I saw Antonio just kicking his brother on the ground in front of the house," Espinoza said.

After that, Espinoza urged their father to let all the kids go at the same time, before they beat each other to death. They hit the heavybag, they sparred. They stopped fighting each other, except for Julio, who was forced to play the dual role of whipping boy and family gopher: "They'd say, 'Julio, get me the hand wraps, get me this, or get me that,' all of the time," Espinoza recalled, laughing.

Despite all of that, what kept Julio boxing was his brothers.

"I never really liked boxing, actually," Julio admitted. "After being around it, I couldn't avoid it. My dad was really strict with us about boxing. He was trying to keep us away from boxing. He didn't want to see us get hurt, but after we grew up, he started to let us box.

"For me, it was great being around my brothers, but they all used to bully me. I was smaller than them and they used to smack me around just because they could. Any favor they asked, I would do it. It wasn't easy, but it was also fun. They matured me a whole lot faster with school and everything. I always had a more mature opinion about everything. I always felt I was an older person because my brothers made me grow up so fast."

The bond between the brothers, especially Julio and Antonio, is so great that it was all right if they tossed punches at one another. It was not a good idea, though, if someone else tried. There was one instance, Julio recalled, when he was in a fight every day one week during his senior year in high school. With other kids aware that he was an amateur boxer, Julio was routinely tested.

But when the one-on-one battles turned into two-on-one and three-on-one, the rest of the Diaz boys stepped in to intercede. The problem stopped.

In 1997, at age 17, Julio was being groomed for the 2000 Olympics, when a funny thing happened to him. Since their youth, Antonio always got the better of his younger sibling, until suddenly one summer day, Julio began winning.

"I thought Antonio was letting me look good, but I know him, he didn't want to look bad in front of other people, especially against me," Julio said, laughing. "When I started beating him, that's when I knew I was ready for the pros."

Julio's pro education took a rapid curve upward, as he sparred with the likes of Angel Manfredy, Floyd Mayweather, Diego Corrales, Carlos Navarro, and Cesar Bazan. As an added bonus, he always had Antonio, with whom he spars very intensely.

"I feel like I can walk through anybody," Julio said. "If Antonio has a chance and sees he can hurt me, he'll go for it, like I do with him. But Antonio's my biggest fan. He admires a lot of the things I do, same as I do with him. That's why it was probably harder for me to watch Antonio in that Mosley fight. That tore my heart out. I saw my brother get knocked down. I just wish I could have been in his place that day."

The kicks and punches Antonio Diaz once threw at his skinny, baby-faced brother have turned into congratulatory pats on the back. Antonio knows the hard sparring will lead to better things for Julio, like the brotherly hits Antonio used to dish out that made Julio tough.

"When we're in the ring, we do forget we're brothers and sometimes Lee has to stop us," Antonio said. "After we're done sparring, a lot of times we'll go over what we did right and wrong, we learn from each other. I don't have a problem saying Julio's better than me and he's going to go further than me. I see him being a world champion soon. We always have a good time; we're always together. It's nice to have a family like this." ■

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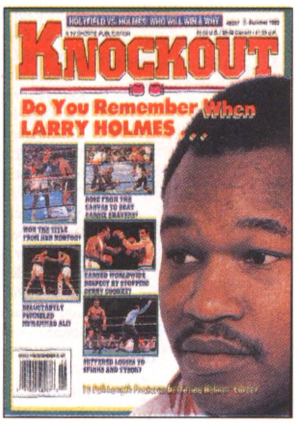

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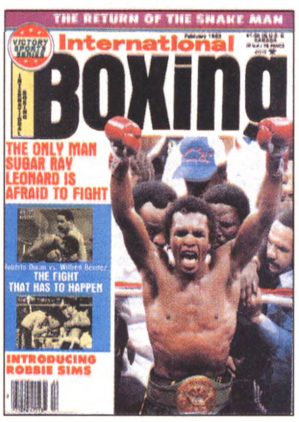

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WORLDWIDE RATINGS

The ratings of the three major governing bodies recognized by The Ring are supplied by the organizations themselves. They are updated on these pages as soon as they are made available to us. In this issue, the WBA ratings were compiled as of September 2000, the WBC as of December 2000, and the IBF as of October 2000.

HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Lennox Lewis (GB)	**C**	**–**	**C**
Evander Holyfield (USA)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Mike Tyson (USA)	1	6	10
Vitaly Klitschko (UKR)	2	9	–
Kirk Johnson (CAN)	3	–	6
Clifford Etienne (USA)	4	–	–
Larry Donald (USA)	5	7	3
John Ruiz (USA)	6	–	–
David Tua (NZ)	7	4	1
Vaughn Bean (USA)	8	12	–
Lance Whitaker (USA)	9	–	–
Henry Akinwande (GB)	10	10	–
Vacant	–	1	2
Wladimir Klitschko (UKR)	–	2	7
Oleg Maskaev (UKR)	24	3	12
John Ruiz (USA)	–	5	8
Kirk Johnson (CAN)	–	8	–
Danell Nicholson (USA)	15	–	4
Hasim Rahman (USA)	14	–	5
Michael Grant (USA)	12	–	9

CRUISERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Juan Carlos Gomez (CUBA)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)	**8**	**C**	**–**
Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Marcelo Dominguez (ARG)	1	4	5
Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)	2	–	9
Carl Thompson (GB)	3	5	3
Torsten May (GER)	4	8	2
Louis Azille (DR)	5	10	8
Jorge Castro (ARG)	6	–	–
Ezra Sellars (USA)	7	12	7
Arthur Williams (USA)	9	6	4
Dale Brown (CAN)	10	–	–
Virgil Hill (USA)	–	1	11
James Toney (USA)	11	2	6
Alexander Gurov (UKR)	17	3	–
Valery Vikhor (LAT)	–	7	–
Andre Purlette (GUY)	–	9	–
Alex Gonzales (USA)	–	–	1
William Guthrie (USA)	24	–	10

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Roy Jones (USA)	**C**	**C**	**C**
Michael Nunn (USA)	1	–	–
Clinton Woods (GB)	2	7	4
Yawe Davis (ITA)	3	–	–
Eric Harding (USA)	4	–	3
Thomas Ulrich (GER)	5	–	–
David Telesco (USA)	6	4	11
Glenn Kelly (AUSTRL)	7	5	1
Jean-Marc Mormerck (FRA)	8	–	–
Chris Johnson (CAN)	9	–	–
Julio Gonzalez (USA)	10	9	–
Lou Del Valle (USA)	–	1	–
Frank Liles (USA)	–	2	–
Derrick Harmon (USA)	11	3	8
Richard Hall (USA)	17	6	–
Jorge Castro (ARG)	–	8	–
Reggie Johnson (USA)	12	10	12
Vacant	–	–	2
Antonio Tarver (USA)	14	–	5
Lincoln Carter (USA)	13	12	6
Will Taylor (USA)	–	–	7
Billy Lewis (USA)	–	–	9
Lee Osie (SPA)	20	–	10

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Dingaan Thobela (SA)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Bruno Girard (FRA)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Sven Ottke (GER)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Eric Lucas (CAN)	1	–	–
Andrei Shkalikov (RUS)	2	1	4
Glenn Catley (GB)	3	–	–
Markus Beyer (GER)	4	–	11
Mario Velt (GER)	5	3	10
Dana Rosenblatt (USA)	6	2	–
Stephane Ouellet (CAN)	7	–	–
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Omar Sheika (USA)	10	–	–
Richie Woodhall (GB)	–	5	–
Manuel Siacca (PR)	–	6	–
Mike Makata (NZ)	–	7	–
Thomas Tate (USA)	11	8	3
Mads Larsen (DEN)	12	9	–
James Butler (USA)	17	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Charles Brewer (USA)	–	11	5
Guy Waters (AUSTRL)	20	–	6
Syd Vanderpool (CAN)	–	–	7
Guillermo Jones (PAN)	–	–	8
Willie McIntyre (USA)	23	–	9

MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Keith Holmes (USA)	**C**	**–**	**–**
William Joppy (USA)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Bernard Hopkins (USA)	**–**	**–**	**C**
Erland Betare (FRA)	1	–	–
David Reid (USA)	2	2	–
Howard Eastman (GB)	3	1	6
Robert McCracken (GB)	4	–	–
Ali Ennebati (FRA)	5	–	9
Kevin Palmer (USA)	6	–	–
Carl Daniels (USA)	7	–	4
Brian Barbosa (USA)	8	–	3
Tito Mendoza (PAN)	9	–	–
Jerry Elliott (NIG)	10	–	–
Guillermo Jones (PAN)	11	3	–
Antwun Echols (USA)	–	4	–
Darren Obah (AUSTRL)	–	5	–
Julio Cesar Green (DR)	–	6	–
Rito Ruvalcaba (MEX)	–	7	–
Hassine Cherifi (FRA)	–	8	11
Lonnie Bradley (USA)	–	9	–
Jonathan Reid (USA)	–	10	–
Antwun Echols (USA)	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Stephane Ouellet (CAN)	–	–	5
Santos Cardona (PR)	–	–	7
Armand Krajnc (SLV)	–	–	8
Lansana Djallo (JUI)	–	–	10

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Francisco Castillejo (SPA)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Felix Trinidad (PR)	**–**	**C**	**–**
Fernando Vargas (USA)	**2**	**–**	**C**
Roman Karmazin (RUS)	1	6	–
Winky Wright (USA)	3	3	1
Alfred Ankamah (GHA)	4	–	–
Quirino Garcia (MEX)	5	–	–
J.C. Candelo (COL)	6	–	12
Fitz Vanderpool (CAN)	7	–	–
Nicolas Cervera (COL)	8	–	–
Tony Marshall (USA)	9	–	–
Akira Ohigashi (JAP)	10	12	–
Vacant	–	1	–
Jose Flores (MEX)	12	2	4
Carl Daniels (USA)	–	4	–
Ike Quartey (GHA)	–	5	9
Kevin Kelly (USA)	15	7	–
Julio Cesar Vazquez (ARG)	–	8	–
Ricardo Mayorga (NIC)	29	9	–
Mamadou Thiam (FRA)	–	10	–
Robert Frazier (USA)	–	–	2
Bronco McKart (USA)	17	–	3
Ross Thompson (USA)	–	–	5
Emmett Linton (USA)	–	11	6
Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)	30	–	7
Evans Ashira (DEN)	–	–	8
Alex Bunema (USA)	–	–	10

WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Shane Mosley (USA)	**C**	**–**	**–**
Vacant	**–**	**C**	**C**
Oscar De La Hoya (USA)	1	2	–
Shannan Taylor (AUSTRL)	2	7	4
Jose Luis Cruz (MEX)	3	–	–
Kofi Jantuah (GHA)	4	–	10
Miguel Angel Gonzalez (MEX)	5	–	–
Carlos Baldomir (ARG)	6	9	–
Danny Perez (USA)	7	12	–
Oba Carr (USA)	8	6	3
Ike Quartey (GHA)	9	–	–
Thomas Damgaard (DEN)	10	5	–
Andrew Lewis (GUY)	22	1	–
Michael Trabant (GERE)	18	3	–
Arturo Gatti (USA)	–	4	12
Frank Olsen (DEN)	–	8	5
Alessandro Duran (ITA)	13	10	–
Raul Frank (USA)	–	–	1
Vernon Forrest (USA)	–	–	2
Steve Roberts (GB)	–	–	6
Michele Piccirillo (ITA)	14	–	7
Hercules Kyvelos (CAN)	20	–	8
Charles Murray (USA)	–	–	9

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)	**C**	**–**	**–**

Sharmba Mitchell (USA)	–	C	–
Zab Judah (USA)	–	–	C
Oktay Urkal (TUR)	1	3	8
Hector Camacho Jr (PR)	2	1	–
Diobelis Hurtado (CUB)	3	2	–
Arturo Gatti (CAN)	4	–	–
Gianluca Branco (ITA)	5	–	–
Ricky Quiles (USA)	6	–	–
Mikhail Krivolapov (RUS)	7	–	–
Ray Oliveira (USA)	8	–	6
Vince Phillips (USA)	9	–	–
John-John Molina (PR)	10	7	–
Antonio Diaz (USA)	20	4	–
Miguel Angel Gonzalez (MEX)	–	5	–
Khalid Rahilou (FRA)	–	6	–
Ben Tackie (GHA)	16	8	–
Gabriel Mapuoka (FRA)	11	9	7
Ricky Hatton (GB)	14	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Allan Vester (DEN)	17	–	3
George Scott (SWE)	28	–	4
Terronn Millett (USA)	–	–	5
Reggie Green (USA)	–	–	9
DeMarcus Corley (USA)	–	–	10

LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)	C	–	–
Takanori Hatakeyama (JAP)	–	C	–
Paul Spadafora (USA)	–	–	C
Cesar Bazan (MEX)	1	–	8
Steve Johnston (USA)	2	–	3
Julien Lorcy (FRA)	3	2	4
Lawrence Ngobeni (SA)	4	–	–
Lovemore Ndou (SA)	5	–	–
Thembinkosi Ntyenene (SA)	6	–	–
Diego Corrales (USA)	7	–	–
Alberto Sicurella (ARG)	8	3	–
Sungho Yuh (KOR)	9	–	–
Juan Lazcano (USA)	10	–	9
Vacant	–	1	–
Rick Yoshimura (JAP)	–	4	–
Gilbert Serrano (VEN)	–	5	–
Stefano Zoff (ITA)	12	6	–
Jean-Baptiste Mendy (FRA)	16	7	–
Raul Balbi (ARG)	–	8	–
Oscar Garcia Cano (SPA)	–	9	–
Edson Xuxa Nascimento (BRA)	23	10	11
Billy Irwin (CAN)	–	–	1
Joel Perez (USA)	–	–	2
Juan Gomez-Trinidad (PR)	17	12	5
Hector Camacho Jr. (USA)	–	–	6
Guillermo Mosquera (COL)	–	–	7
Victoriano Damian Sosa (DR)	13	–	10

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Floyd Mayweather (USA)	C	–	–
Joel Casamayor (CUB)	–	C	–
Vacant	–	**1**	C
Jesus Chavez (USA)	1	11	7
Sirimongkol Singmanassuk (THAI)	2	–	–
Kengo Nagashima (JAP)	3	–	–
Tiger Ari (PHIL)	4	–	–
Philip Ndou (SA)	5	–	–
Goyo Vargas (MEX)	6	–	–
Carlos Hernandez (EL SALV)	7	–	–
Michael Gomez (GB)	8	–	–
Koji Arisawa (JAP)	9	–	–
Boris Sinitsin (RUS)	10	–	–
Lakva Sim (MON)	–	2	–
Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)	–	3	–
Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)	11	4	11
Jongkwon Baek (KOR)	–	5	–
Luis Navarro (USA)	14	6	10
Steve Forbes (USA)	–	7	2
Robert Garcia (USA)	–	8	6
Jorge Barrios (ARG)	–	9	–
Dennis Holbaek (DEN)	–	10	–
John Brown (USA)	–	–	1
Raul Balbi (ARG)	–	–	3
Carlos Hernandez (USA)	–	–	4
Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)	–	–	5
David Santos (USA)	–	–	8
Juan Arias (USA)	–	–	9

FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Guty Espadas (MEX)	C	–	–
Derrick Gainer (USA)	–	C	–
Paul Ingle (GB)	–	–	C
Injin Chi (KOR)	1	–	–
Tony Wehbee (AUS)	2	–	8
Luisito Espinosa (PHIL)	3	–	–
Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)	4	4	–
Scott Harrison (GB)	5	–	–
Manuel Calvo (SPA)	6	–	–
Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)	7	–	–
Edgar Barcenas (MEX)	8	–	–
Juan Carlos Ramirez (MEX)	9	–	–
Hector Velazquez (MEX)	10	–	–
Vacant	–	1	–
Victor Polo (COL)	–	2	4
Angel Vasquez (PR)	–	3	3
Philip Ndou (SA)	–	5	–
Istvan Kovacs (HUN)	–	6	–
Lewis Woods (US)	–	7	–
Fred Norwood (USA)	–	8	–
Pablo Chacon (ARG)	–	9	–
Kengo Nagashima (JAP)	–	10	–
Manuel Medina (MEX)	14	–	1
Mbulelo Botile (SA)	–	–	2
Naseem Hamed (GB)	–	–	5
David Toledo (USA)	–	–	6
Oscar Larios (MEX)	–	–	7
Augie Sanchez (USA)	23	–	9
Frankie Toledo (USA)	–	–	10

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Willie Jorrin (USA)	C	–	–
Clarence Adams (USA)	–	C	–
Lehlo Ledwaba (SA)	–	–	C
Oscar Larios (MEX)	1	–	–
Michael Brodie (GB)	2	12	8
Manny Pacquaio (PHIL)	3	–	4
Enrique Sanchez (MEX)	4	8	5
Cesar Soto (MEX)	5	–	–
Yongjin Cho (KOR)	6	–	–
Israel Vazquez (MEX)	7	–	7
Agapito Sanchez (DR)	8	–	11
Hector Julia Avila (DR)	9	–	9
Marcos Licona (USA)	10	–	–
Vacant	–	1	1
Yobert Ortega (VEN)	–	2	–
Kozo Ishii (JAP)	–	3	–
Jose Rojas (VEN)	25	4	–
Bugiarso (INDO)	–	5	–
Nestor Garza (MEX)	–	6	–
Vladislav Antonov (RUS)	12	7	–
Osamu Sato (JAP)	11	9	–
Eduardo Alvarez (ARG)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	2
Sergei Devakov (UKR)	16	–	3
F. Rakkiatgym (INDO)	–	–	6
Arnel Barotillo (AUSTRL)	27	–	10

BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Veerapol Sahaprom (THAI)	C	–	–
Paul Ayala (USA)	–	C	–
Tim Austin (USA)	–	–	C
Ricardo Barajas (MEX)	1	–	–
Genaro Garcia (USA)	2	11	–
Adan Vargas (MEX)	3	6	3
Cuauhtemoc Gomez (MEX)	4	4	–
Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)	5	–	–
Hugo Dianzo (MEX)	6	–	–
Jess Maca (PHIL)	7	–	–
Alejandro Estrada (MEX)	8	–	–
Johnny Bredahl (DEN)	9	7	–
Luigi Castiglione (ITA)	10	–	8
Vacant	–	1	2
Sahoiu Sithchai Condo (THAI)	–	2	–
Danny Romero (USA)	–	3	5
Fernando Montiel (MEX)	–	5	–
Rafael Marquez (MEX)	13	8	9
Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)	–	9	–
Jorge Eliecer Julio (COL)	–	10	–
Jesus Perez (COL)	21	–	1
Pete Frissina (USA)	–	–	4
Arthur Johnson (USA)	–	–	6
Dario Azuaga (PAR)	–	–	7
Steve Dotse (GHA)	–	–	10

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Masanori Tokuyama (JAP)	C	–	–
Hideki Todaka (JAP)	**15**	C	–
Felix Machado (VEN)	–	–	C
Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)	1	–	–
In Joo Cho (KOR)	2	–	–
Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)	3	–	–
Kazuhiro Ryuko (JAP)	4	–	–
Reynaldo Hurtado (COL)	5	–	–
Vernie Torres (USA)	6	9	6
Luis Bolanos (COL)	7	8	7
Mauricio Pastrana (COL)	8	–	8
Seungrok Choi (KOR)	9	–	–
Raul Juarez (MEX)	10	–	–
Leo Gamez (VEN)	–	1	–
Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)	–	2	5
Jesus Rojas (VEN)	–	3	3
Edison Torres (VEN)	–	4	–
Jesper Jensen (DEN)	–	5	–
Akihigo Nago (JAP)	12	6	–
Yokthai Sithoar (THAI)	–	7	–
Diego Morales (MEX)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Adonis Rivas (NIC)	–	–	4
Julio Gamboa (NIC)	–	–	9
Everardo Morales (MEX)	–	–	10

FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Malcolm Tunacao (PHIL)	C	–	–
Eric Morel (USA)	–	C	–
Irene Pacheco (COL)	–	–	C
Chatchai Sasakul (THAI)	1	–	–
Alex Ali Baba (GHA)	2	–	12
Celes Kobayashi (JAP)	3	–	–
Mike Trejo (USA)	4	6	–
Medgoen Singsurat (THAI)	5	–	–
Gerson Guerrero (MEX)	6	–	–
Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)	7	–	–
Hayato Asai (JAP)	8	–	–
Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)	9	–	–
Alejandro Montiel (MEX)	10	10	5
Vacant	–	1	2
Denkaosaen Kaowitch (THAI)	–	2	–
Panieng Okuda (THAI)	–	3	–
Sornpichai Kratchingdaeng (THAI)	–	4	–
David Guerault (FRA)	13	5	1
Gilberto Gonzalez (VEN)	–	7	–
Mzukisi Sikali (SA)	29	8	–
Jose Lopez (VEN)	–	9	–
Hawk Makepula (SA)	–	–	3
Zoltan Lunka (TUR)	20	–	4
Shiro Yahiro (JAP)	–	–	6
Martin Castillo (MEX)	–	–	7
Edicson Torres (PAN)	–	–	8
Ferid Ben Jeddou (TUN)	–	–	9
Pedro Pena (USA)	–	–	10

JR. FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Yosam Choi (KOR)	C	–	–
Bebis Mendoza (COL)	–	C	–
Ricardo Lopez (MEX)	–	–	C
Jorge Arce (MEX)	1	6	11
Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)	2	8	–
Hidenobu Honda (JAP)	3	2	–
Panieng Sasiprabha (THAI)	4	–	–
Takayuki Korogi (JAP)	5	–	–
Eric Ortiz (MEX)	6	–	–
Juanito Rubillar (PHIL)	7	–	–
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam (THAI)	8	–	–
Kohki Tanaka (JAP)	9	11	–
Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)	10	–	–
Pichitnoi C. Siriwat (THAI)	–	1	–
Yura Dimas (MON)	17	3	–
Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)	–	4	–
Pongsaklek Nakornton (THAI)	–	5	–
Masibulele Makepula (SA)	–	7	–
Noel Arambulet (VEN)	–	9	–
Nelson Dieppa (DR)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Ratanapol Sor Vorapin (THAI)	–	–	3
Zolani Petelo (SA)	–	–	4
Everardo Morales (MEX)	–	–	5
Pongsaklek Sithkanongsak (THAI)	–	–	6
Alex Sanchez (PR)	–	–	7
Will Grigsby (USA)	–	–	8
Taekil Lee (KOR)	–	–	9
Domingo Guillen (DR)	–	–	10

STRAWWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Jose Antonio Aguirre (MEX)	C	–	–
Joma Gamboa (PHIL)	**9**	C	–
Vacant	–	–	C
Wandee Chor Chareon (THAI)	1	–	8
Yasuo Tokimitsu (JAP)	2	–	9
Juan Keb Baas (MEX)	3	–	–
Erdene Chuluun (MON)	4	–	–
Makoto Suzuki (JAP)	5	10	–
Jaewon Kim (KOR)	6	–	–
Andy Tabanas (PHIL)	7	11	–
Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)	8	–	–
Zarlit Rodrigo (PHIL)	10	–	–
Vacant	–	1	2
Chana Porpaoin (THAI)	17	2	–
Daniel Reyes (COL)	–	3	1
Jose Garcia (COL)	–	4	–
Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)	14	5	–
Songkram Porpaoin (THAI)	–	6	–
Satoru Abe (JAP)	22	7	–
Udomdet Porpaoin (THAI)	–	8	–
Fasan Pongsawan (THAI)	–	9	–
Rocky Palma (JAP)	–	–	3
Kermin Guardia (COL)	–	–	4
Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)	–	–	5
Rocky Lim (TWN)	–	–	6
Alberto Rossel (PERU)	–	–	7
Surachai Saengmorokot (THAI)	–	–	10

CLASSIC

From THE RING, January 1972

TO FIGHT OR NOT TO FIGHT?

That Is The Big Frazier-Durham Query

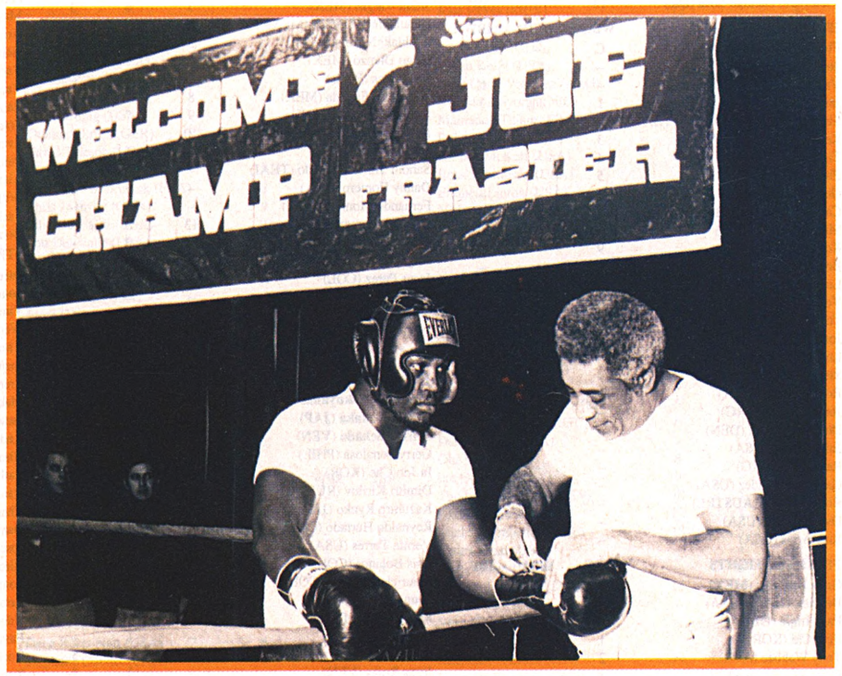
By Dan Daniel

Cassius Clay, also known as Muhammad Ali, is cavorting from Broadway to Nigeria, from the Congo to Houston, from campus to market place. His cohorts insist that while Joe Frazier "may own the world heavyweight title," Clay is the champion.

Frazier, on the other hand, lives the life of a hermit, insofar as fighting and talking fights are concerned. Frazier, who failed to interest music fans of Europe on a tour of his Knockouts, and Yancy Durham, his manager and trainer, are hard to reach. It's much easier to reach President Richard M. Nixon, or even Queen Elizabeth of England.

Talk of a second meeting of Frazier and Clay has died down. Durham says that he does not have this fight on his schedule for earlier than late-1972, or even 1973. Frazier has told confidants in Philadelphia that he would like to fight Clay next March.

Now then, who is the real boss of the Frazier camp? Is it the world champion? Or is it actually Yank Durham, one-time manager of preliminary fighters in Philadelphia, who spotted Frazier as an amateur, and with the help of the backing of Cloverlay Inc., piloted Frazier to a world title?



While Muhammad Ali was eager for a rematch with heavyweight champ Joe Frazier, "Smokin' Joe" and trainer/manager Yancy Durham, pictured lacing Frazier's gloves, played hard-to-get-a-hold-of, as Frazier went to Europe to promote his singing career.

THE RING detectives are busy trying to dig out the reasons for Durham's evident desire to keep his charge away from Clay for as long as possible. Here are some of the conclusions that have been offered as possible explanations:

1. Durham figures that the longer he waits, the older will Clay get, and the older Clay gets (he will be 30 come January), the better for Frazier's position.

2. Durham figures that in a return fight, Clay will be more formidable than he was that big night in Madison Square Garden.

3. Durham wants Frazier to fight Clay in New York, and not in California, where Jack Kent Cooke says he has picked up his option to promote the return match in his Forum at Inglewood.

Yancy is said to be determined not to let Frazier fight in California where, the night Ismael Laguna battered Mando Ramos out in nine rounds and whipped the losing lightweight champion all the way, both of the judges had Ramos in the lead at the stoppage. Those judges made Cain Young, Laguna's manager, resolve not to respect a deal for a return fight in California. Young has warned Durham.

4. Frazier's "athlete's kidney" was more serious than reported after the Clay fight, and Yank wants more time for Joe to become absolutely certain of being in prime condition for another fracas with the Black Muslim.

Clay now is on his own. Just what hold Herbert Muhammad and the Muslims have on him is not certain. But Cassius is long past the day when he has to take dictation from the group of Louisville-Caucasians who sponsored his development.

Frazier, on the other hand, reputedly has two bosses, Cloverlay stockholders, and Durham, who trains and manages Joe by virtue of an agreement with Cloverlay, which expires in 1974. Certainly Durham cannot hope to delay a Frazier title defense against Clay until Joe is free of Cloverlay and its heavy impost on the champion's earnings.

Durham and Frazier after their most significant triumph, against Ali in 1971 at Madison Square Garden. The blame for the holdup for Frazier-Ali II was falling on Durham, making boxing experts wonder who the real boss was in the Frazier camp.

Of more immediate relationship to Durham's desire to fight in New York is the certainty that, before long, the New York State tax rate that hit both Clay and Frazier in Madison Square Garden for $348,000, will be reduced to legal and acceptable proportions. Until that tax situation is resolved, the Garden cannot promote big-money fights. The boxers won't stand for that tax.

All of which somehow leads us back to the question: Is Yancy Durham the real boss in the somewhat involved situation in the Frazier camp?

Frazier's field of eligibles is not as extensive as the one Clay is thumbing through. Joe knocked out Jimmy Ellis before Clay did it. Frazier knocked out Buster Mathis. A Frazier fight with George Chuvalo would not produce any raves. Nor is Jack Bodell, the new champion of Europe, rated a worthy foe for the Cloverlay standard-bearer.

The way things stand in the Frazier-Durham-Cloverlay family, it challenges the past to produce a counterpart.

Not even the Jack Dempsey-Jack Kearns partnership matches the F.D.C. combination. Kearns maneuvered Jack into the title fight with Jess Willard by wearing down Tex Rickard's opposition to the match on the ground that Dempsey was too small for the behemoth who had taken the world title from Jack Johnson.

Dempsey and Kearns kept moving apart after the fight with Tom Gibbons at Shelby, Montana, a mere cowtown with strange hallucinations.

When Dempsey married movie star Estelle Taylor, Kearns was shunted on the way out. Estelle and Kearns hated each other cordially. Dempsey became convinced that he no longer owed anything to

THE RING RATINGS, January 1972

Ken Buchanan

HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Joe Frazier, Philadelphia, PA
1. **Cassius Clay**, Cherry Hill, NJ
2. **George Foreman**, Hayward, CA
3. **Jerry Quarry**, Los Angeles, CA
4. **Oscar Bonavena**, Argentina
5. **Mac Foster**, Fresno, CA
6. **Jimmy Ellis**, Louisville, KY
7. **Floyd Patterson**, New York, NY
8. **Jack Bodell**, England
9. **Jose Luis Garcia**, Venezuela
10. **Joe Bugner**, England

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Bob Foster, Washington, D.C.
1. **Vicente Rondon**, Venezuela
2. **Jimmy Dupree**, Jersey City, NJ
3. **Andy Kendall**, Portland, OR
4. **Chris Finnegan**, England
5. **Conny Velensek**, Germany
6. **Mike Quarry**, Los Angeles, CA
7. **Gomeo Brennan**, Bahamas
8. **Brian Kelly Burden**, Cushing, OK
9. **Hal Carroll**, Syracuse, NY
10. **Pat O'Connor**, Rochester, MN

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Carlos Monzon, Argentina
1. **Pierre Fourie**, South Africa
2. **Emile Griffith**, New York, NY
3. **Denny Moyer**, Portland, OR
4. **Jean-Claude Bouttier**, France
5. **Bunny Sterling**, England
6. **Rafael Gutierrez**, Mexico
7. **Rodrigo Valdez**, Colombia
8. **Carmelo Bossi**, Italy
9. **Bennie Briscoe**, Philadelphia, PA
10. **Eugene Hart**, Philadelphia, PA

WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Jose Napoles, Mexico
1. **Ernie Lopez**, Las Vegas, NV
2. **Marcel Cerdan Jr.**, France
3. **Adolph Pruitt**, St. Louis, MO
4. **Robert Gallois**, France
5. **Hedgemon Lewis**, Detroit, MI
6. **Clyde Gray**, Canada
7. **Raul Soriano**, Mexico
8. **Billy Backus**, Syracuse, NY
9. **Thurman Durden**, Los Angeles, CA
10. **Sandro Lopopolo**, Italy

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Nicolino Loche, Argentina
1. **Bruno Arcari**, Italy
2. **Joao Henrique**, Brazil
3. **Johnny Gant**, Washington, D.C.
4. **Eddie Perkins**, Chicago, IL
5. **Jeff White**, Australia
6. **Jimmy Robertson**, San Francisco, CA
7. **Paco Flores**, Phoenix, AZ
8. **Nate Robinson**, Los Angeles, CA
9. **Bunny Grant**, Jamaica
10. **Carlos Gimenez**, Argentina

LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Ken Buchanan, Scotland
1. **Pedro Carrasco**, Spain
2. **Ismael Laguna**, Panama
3. **Antonio Puddu**, Italy
4. **Shinichi Kadota**, Japan
5. **Al Ford**, Canada
6. **Chango Carmona**, Mexico
7. **Roberto Duran**, Panama
8. **Percy Hayles**, Jamaica
9. **Alfonso Frazier**, Panama
10. **Raymundo Dias**, Brazil

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Alfredo Marcano, Venezuela
1. **Frankie Otero**, Miami Beach, FL
2. **Jose Marin**, Costa Rica
3. **Rene Barrientos**, Philippines
4. **Yoshiaki Numata**, Japan
5. **Hiroshi Kobayashi**, Japan
6. **Sammy Goss**, Trenton, NJ
7. **Antonio Amaya**, Panama
8. **Ruben Navarro**, Los Angeles, CA
9. **Frankie Crawford**, Los Angeles, CA
10. **Ugo Poli**, Italy

FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Kuniaki Shibata, Japan
1. **Antonio Gomez**, Venezuela
2. **Ricardo Arredondo**, Mexico
3. **Eder Jofre**, Brazil
4. **Shozo Saijyo**, Japan
5. **Vicente Saldivar**, Mexico
6. **Tahar Hassen**, Tunis
7. **Jose Legra**, Spain
8. **Ben Villaflor**, Philippines
9. **Toro George**, New Zealand
10. **Evan Armstrong**, Scotland

BANTAMWEIGHTS
World Champ: Ruben Olivares, Mexico
1. **Rafael Herrera**, Mexico
2. **Jesus Pimentel**, Los Angeles, CA
3. **Rodolfo Martinez**, Mexico
4. **Chucho Castillo**, Mexico
5. **Alan Rudkin**, England
6. **Ramon Bravo**, Venezuela
7. **Franco Zurlo**, Italy
8. **Augustin Senin**, Spain
9. **Enrique Pinder**, Panama
10. **Octavio Gomez**, Mexico

FLYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Erbito Salvarria, Philippines
1. **Masao Ohba**, Japan
2. **Betulio Gonzalez**, Venezuela
3. **Servillo de Oliveire**, Brazil
4. **Venich Borkorsor**, Thailand
5. **Lorenzo Gutierrez**, Mexico
6. **Ricardo Delgado**, Mexico
7. **Fernando Atzori**, Italy
8. **Fernando Cabanela**, Philippines
9. **Miguel Canto**, Mexico
10. **Orlando Amoros**, Panama

his manager. Estelle said so.

How Kearns met Dempsey, how they pursued a fortune-making career as a team, how they fell apart, is a story for a book. It has been written times innumerable, and has not been truly told yet.

We find that when Dempsey reached the crisis of his career in the two fights with Gene Tunney, Kearns no longer was in "The Manassa Mauler's" camp.

A fighter-manager relationship that lasted to the end, with the end hastened by the champion's desire to get away from his pilot, was the Rocky Marciano-Al Weill partnership.

Weill was invited to take a look at Rocky in a fight in Providence, with the plan to have Al take over, but it resulted in a definite "No" from the manager. However, certain friends of Weill induced him to change his mind, and Al organized a remarkable campaign that placed Marciano in the forefront of Jersey Joe Walcott's challengers. In a savage battle

Throughout boxing history, the manager-fighter relationship has always been ambiguous. Jack Kearns and former heavyweight champ Jack Dempsey were a highly successful team. That is, before Dempsey's new wife, Estelle, changed all of that.

There was no question who was the boss in the camp of Primo Carnera, as he was built into a contender, and then took the title from Jack Sharkey. Primo's boss was Billy Duffy, and Duffy's boss, report had it, was Owney Madden, the Prohibition-time beer lord of New York. Madden died in virtual obscurity in Hot Springs, Arkansas, not so long ago.

Primo was the automaton. He did what he was told. He was the most incredible sucker for his managers in boxing history. No heavyweight champion ever got so little profit out of the title since the days of Jim Corbett. No heavyweight champion was so ruthlessly fleeced by his managers.

The war ended "Da Preem's" ring operations. In 1946 he turned to wrestling, in which he did extremely well minus a manager and a boss. He ended his days running a salami-and-liquor shop in Los Angeles.

It's extremely difficult to think of Joe Jacobs, who managed Max Schmeling into the heavyweight leadership, as a boss. Joe was a happy-go-lucky guy who had a lot of interesting natural gifts. He was persuasive rather than peremptory. One of Joe's chief assets was the fact that Madison Square Garden promoter Mike Jacobs liked him.

Behind Joe Jacobs in his maneuvers with "The Black Uhlan" was Max

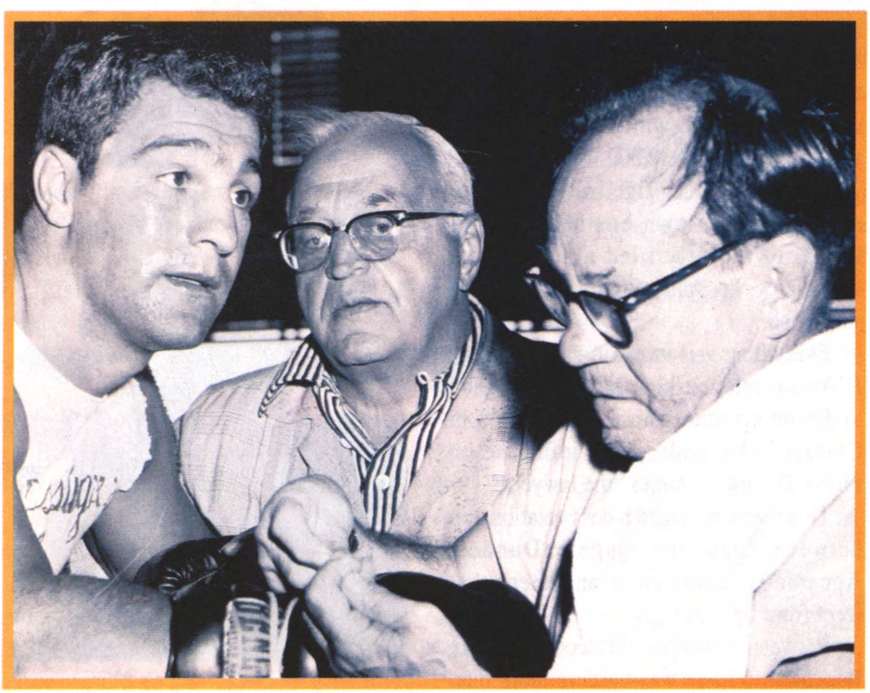
in Philadelphia, Rocky became the world titleholder.

Weill had to be the big boss of that camp. Marciano was not the rebel kind. But gradually Weill's influence over the champion weakened. Rocky did not like Weill personally. Neither did Mrs. Marciano.

In time, the deteriorating situation between Rocky and Al, and Mrs. Marciano's battle to bring about her husband's retirement, broke up the partnership. It was a very lucrative one for the manager.

Actually, there was nobody for Rocky to fight, and he had tired of the hard regimen of training and fighting. Rocco was one of the greatest heavyweights in history, but it is doubtful if he liked to fight.

For a time there was a fighter-manager boss relationship between Joe Louis and the John Roxborough-Julian Black combination. But it did not last.



Not all manager-fighter relationships were overflowing with trust. Rocky Marciano did not trust, or personally like, manager Al Weill, pictured between Rocky and trainer Charlie Goldman.

Max Schmeling, bedridden after the second fight with Joe Louis, is flanked by manager Joe Jacobs on the left and trainer Max Machon on the right. Schmeling and the happy-go-lucky Jacobs were so close, Schmeling ignored the order by Adolph Hitler to drop the Jewish manager.

Machon, to whom fell the unhappy duty of throwing in a towel in the first round that June night in 1938 that saw champion Joe Louis avenge his 12-round kayo by the German in 1936. Referee Arthur Donovan paid no attention to the towel and called a halt. Time: two minutes, four seconds.

There was no question about who was the family boss when Floyd Patterson won the heavyweight title, and pursued a strange career, featured by odd challengers like Pete Rademacher and "Cut And Shoot" Harris. The emphatic director of that Patterson family was Cus D'Amato, who helped Floyd win the title and earn something like $6,000,000.

Patterson still is fighting, apparently conducting his own business affairs. D'Amato recently filed a petition for bankruptcy, his split of the Patterson treasury gone.

Everything was sweet in the Patterson-D'Amato relationship until Floyd signed to defend his title against Sonny Liston in Chicago. That ended Cus' influence on Floyd. D'Amato blames "the lawyers."

There was no fighter-boss relationship between Clay and Angelo Dundee. Apparently it was an arrangement that went from fight to fight.

Between Jersey Joe Walcott and Felix Bocchicchio there was nothing more than a business arrangement. Felix was inclined to remain in the background.

About Sonny Liston's managerial families, the less said the better.

Ezzard Charles had two managers, Jake Mintz and Tom Tannas. There, again, we find the relationship all business.

Jim Braddock and Joe Gould were not what might be called palsy-walsies. That Gould was the boss of the combine is doubtful.

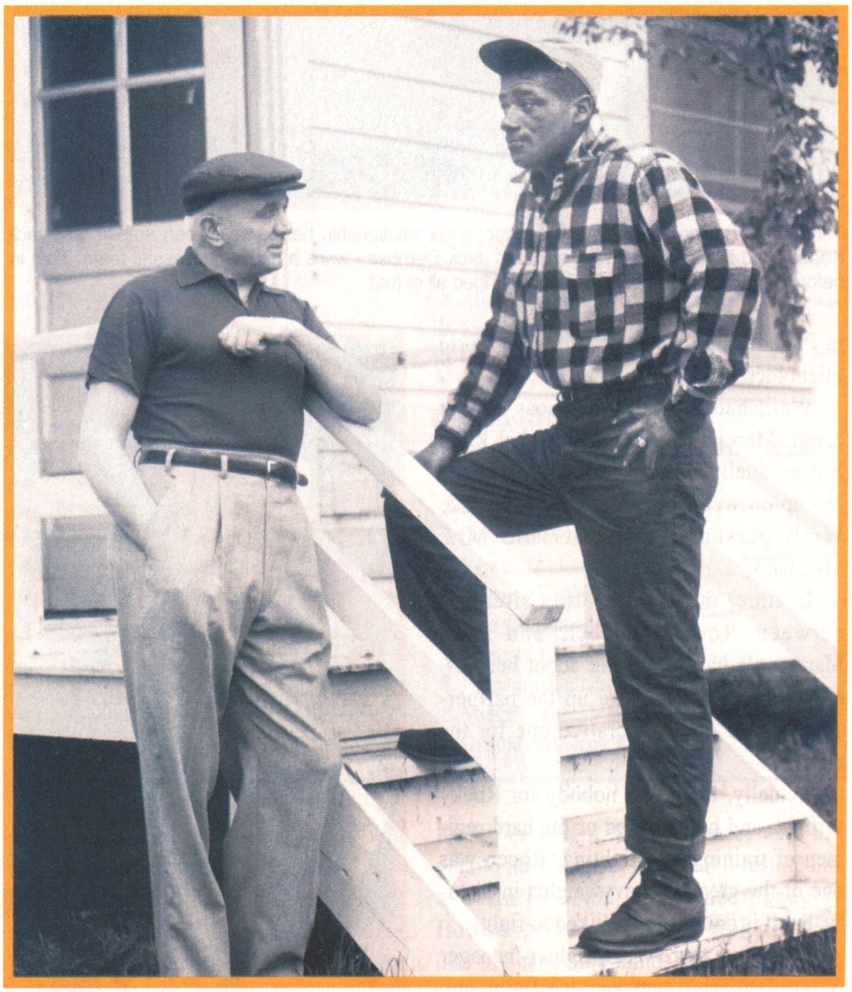
Max Baer and Anoil Hoffman were a friendly duo, with Maxie the playboy doing pretty much as he pleased.

Johnny Buckley was a wise director for Jack Sharkey, but Buckley was no Damon to Jack's Pythias.

Jack Johnson had managers galore, the most prominent of whom was George Little. His role was not vital.

Jess Willard was no Trilby to Tom Jones' Svengali.

Bill Brady first managed Jim Corbett, later went with Jim Jeffries, and at all times was in the theater rather than in the ring.



Cus D'Amato helped Floyd Patterson become the youngest man to ever win the heavyweight championship. Everything between Patterson and D'Amato seemed great, until Patterson opted to defend the title against Sonny Liston, causing D'Amato to leave.

Heavyweight champ Jim Braddock, who reigned briefly in the mid-'30s, did not exactly get along with his manager, Joe Gould. It was doubtful Gould called the shots in that fighter-manager relationship.

Bill Brady made a living as the manager of former heavyweight champs "Gentleman" Jim Corbett and, later, Jim Jeffries. But Brady was known to spend more time in the theater than at ringside.

Martin Julian was Bob Fitzsimmons' manager of record, but Martin was no boss. He was a quiet brother-in-law.

It will be noted that a lot of the fighter-manager families broke up, some of them explosively, like Dempsey-Kearns and Patterson-D'Amato.

The average manager's cut is 33 percent. Eventually the boxer, or some influence like a wife, decides that while he is getting all the punches and doing all the training, his pilot is living the easy life and collecting opulently on the fighter's efforts. Soon there is a flare-up.

Durham's position is a favored one, since he works for Cloverlay, and not directly for Frazier. There have been good extras for Yank. But he cannot be fired, unless for extraordinary reasons, by Frazier.

Durham is what might be called a benevolent boss. He maintains a close social relationship with Frazier. Now and then they disagree, but so far it has not been on fistic matters.

Durham did not want Joe to take his Knockouts to Europe. Durham did not believe that the customers overseas would go for the Knockouts. Nor did he see the trip benefiting the fighter's condition. As it turned out, Durham was 100 percent right. ■

THE RING, January 1972

The Cover: Boxing fans across the country were wondering what was going on with Joe Frazier and the possibility of a Frazier-Ali II. THE RING provides insights, focusing on the relationship between Yancy Durham, Frazier's trainer/manager, and the world champ himself.

No Garden Party: There was talk that Ali-Frazier II would be held at a venue on the West Coast, after rumors circulated that Madison Square Garden (pictured) would be getting out of boxing. Not true, stated Harry Markson, head of The Garden's boxing department.

Braddock's Tale: Former world heavyweight champion James Braddock spoke about how he defeated Max Baer, despite being a 10-1 longshot, to become heavyweight champ. Referred to as "The Cinderella Man," Braddock went on to sign one of the sweetest deals in boxing history, receiving 10 percent of every Joe Louis fight as part of the deal in defending the title against "The Brown Bomber."

The Legend Of Monzon: Middleweight champion Carlos Monzon vanquished Emile Griffith, with referee Ramon Berumen stopping the bout with 14 seconds left in the 14th round. Afterward, Griffith claimed, "Carlos is a first-class champion ... better than Nino Benvenuti ever was."

Fighter Of The Month: George Foreman risked his lofty number-two rating by taking on Brazilian heavyweight champion Luis Faustino Pires, knocking out Pires in the fourth round at Madison Square Garden and continuing to stay on the heels of heavyweight champ Joe Frazier and number-one contender Muhammad Ali.

COME OUT WRITING

We welcome your letters, which may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Ft. Washington, PA 19034

KEEP THE BALL ROLLING

Boxing is in great shape. 2000 was one of the better years for boxing in the last five years. Great fights have filled the cable as well as pay-per-view circuits. We've seen great fights such as Shane Mosley-Oscar De La Hoya, Fernando Vargas-Ike Quartey, and my fight of the year, Felix Trinidad-Vargas. Also, Diego Corrales is marching to the top of his division, and Bernard Hopkins is proving he's a Hall of Famer.

I truly hope the networks, as well as the promoters, keep the ball rolling in the same direction in 2001. I'm hoping that public demand will prevail. I alone spent $300 last year on pay-per-view bouts and will continue to buy as long as the main course lives up to the standard set in 2000.

JAMES HAVDOUGLAS
Palm Coast, FL

VIVA TRINIDAD!

Felix Trinidad is the best fighter in boxing, pound-for-pound, round-for-round, punch-for-punch. He went against his usual form with a blistering start against Fernando Vargas that nearly ended the fight before it was a minute old, and then reverted to his characteristic style, gradually increasing the pressure late in the fight until he had broken not just the body, but the will of Vargas. And he did it in a way that one of the other leading pretenders for his title as pound-for-pound champ, Roy Jones, would never dare, and another, the super-talented Shane Mosley, probably isn't capable of yet.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/ALLSPORT

Felix Trinidad earned all-time great status with his exciting 12th-round knockout victory over previously undefeated Fernando Vargas, according to reader Alberto Velez. Trinidad started strong and finished strong in the fight, something Roy Jones would never dare.

Jones never would have fought the 12th round that Trinidad did against the dangerous Vargas. Clearly leading on all cards and needing only to make it to the finish line, Trinidad chose to close the show spectacularly like the champion he is. After the ninth round, Trinidad could have been forgiven if he had chosen to take the rest of the night off. He could have jabbed and boxed his way to a safe and easy victory. But Trinidad is not Jones, who does not fight so much as give danger-free bouts, and he is not Oscar De La Hoya, who danced his way into defeat against Trinidad last September after dominating the first half of their fight.

Trinidad is nothing but an all-time great.

ALBERTO VELEZ
Elizabeth, NJ

PAY-PER-HAPPY

Finally! I shelled out $44.95 for a pay-per-view and, much to my surprise, I received my money's worth. The Fernando Vargas-Felix Trinidad fight was definitely one for the ages. Unlike Lennox Lewis-David Tua, I had no idea how this fight would play out. Who would have thought that Trinidad would knock Vargas down in the first round, not once but twice, and be unable to finish? Who would have thought that Vargas would work his way back into the fight and make it interesting? The only part of this fight that went the way it was supposed to is that "Tito's" experience carried him to victory. The surprising part about that is that I thought Vargas would win.

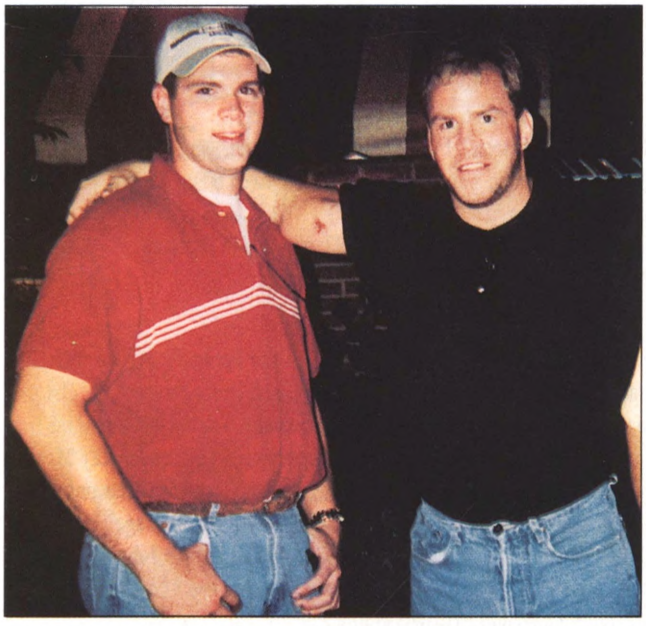
Simply put, I now know what makes a great fight: the unknown. The beauty of this fight is that they could have a rematch and I still wouldn't want to put my money on either fighter!

SCOTT MEREDITH
Auburn, WA

REMEMBERING THE DUKE

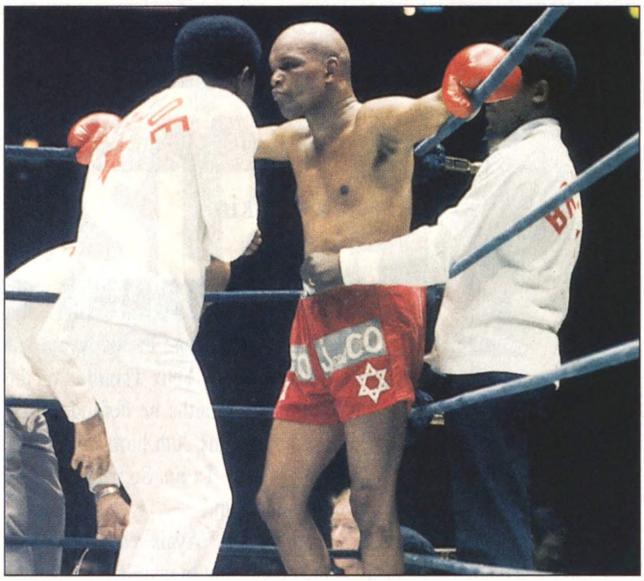
Tommy Morrison … remember him? As "The Duke" prepares for his prison release in a few months, I'm taken back to the memories of Tommy's wars in and out of the ring. I was always a big Morrison fan, and one thing he always brought to a fight was excitement. True, he failed his major tests against Ray Mercer and Lennox Lewis, and his loss to Michael Bentt was totally inexcusable. However, HBO and ESPN both have admitted that their ratings always sky-rocketed when Tommy fought.

Morrison had a huge following during his career, and I think there are a lot of fans that would like to know how he's doing and what his plans are. It's easy to remember Tommy as the guy who was in *Rocky V* or the boxer with HIV, but the story goes deeper than that. I got a chance to meet Tommy before his judicial vacation, and he has to be one of the nicest people I've met. I implore THE RING to do a feature on Tommy. We get to read every month about Lennox Lewis, Oscar De La Hoya, Felix Trinidad, and Roy Jones. They will all be around next month. The duration of Tommy is always questionable!



HIV-positive heavyweight Tommy "The Duke" Morrison still has fans, including reader Darron Walters (pictured with Morrison). Walters wishes Morrison well upon the fighter's pending release from prison.

DARRON WALTERS
Winnsboro, LA



Feared Philadelphia slugger Bennie Briscoe, who always stood between rounds, is fondly recalled by reader Dave Ward, who attended many of "Baaad Bennie's" fights in the mid- to late-'70s.

"BAAAD" MEMORIES

As a long-time fight fan and a subscriber to THE RING, I thoroughly enjoyed your article on Philadelphia middleweight Bennie Briscoe ("Philly Booms Briscoe As Coming Champ," February 2001), as reprinted from the May 1972 edition of THE RING. My father and I attended many fights in Philadelphia in the mid- to late-1970s, and no one was more entertaining or devastating to watch than "Baaad Bennie." We witnessed, perhaps, some of the greatest toe-to-toe battles in the history of boxing. Briscoe took on all comers, no questions asked. Cyclone Hart, Kitten Hayward, Eddie Gregory, and an up-and-coming middleweight named Marvin Hagler were just some of the fighters on Briscoe's resume. With no disrespect intended toward Briscoe, Bennie was surely in the twilight of his career when he faced Hagler. In true fashion, though, Bennie gave it his all and dropped a decision to the future Hall of Famer.

In today's game of multiple champions in each weight class and huge purses for the elite fighters, it is a shame that Bennie is not around now. Without a doubt, Briscoe would hold some version of the middleweight title today. In addition, Briscoe's style of punishing, unrelenting, trench warfare would be a huge draw on pay-per-view. Fans of Arturo Gatti would find a similar never-say-die combatant in Briscoe.

It would also be unfair not to mention his narrow losses to Carlos Monzon and Rodrigo Valdes, two tremendous middleweight champions. Truly, Bennie was just around at the wrong time. Today's crop of "top" middleweights would be no more than sparring partners for the fierce left-hooker from Philadelphia.

DAVE WARD
Linwood, NJ ■

LOOKING AHEAD

By Eric Raskin

PAULIE WANNA CRACKER

Ayala: Wants "The Cincinnati Kid"

It was one year ago that **Paulie Ayala** graced his first and only RING cover, striking a similar pose to that assumed by **Felix Trinidad** on this issue. Ayala was the 1999 Fighter of the Year, and in the ensuing 12 months he defended the WBA bantamweight title against tough **Johnny Bredahl**, celebrated his 30th birthday, then made every concession imaginable and still repeated his win over **Johnny Tapia**. So with all that's transpired in the last couple of years, what's motivating him at this point?

"The competition," Ayala responded. "I want to prove that I'm the best out there—not necessarily to the people, but to myself. I'm in the gym training, I want to get back in the ring in March, and then I want to have a big fight in June. I'm ready to start moving and unifying."

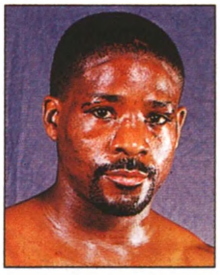
The opponent Ayala wants most is IBF counterpart **Tim Austin**. A unification bout on Showtime between the two excellent champions has been in the works for months, though Ayala realizes it won't be an easy fight to make.

"I've been trying to fight Austin for the longest time," Ayala said. "As far as making it happen, it's up to Bob Arum and Don King. We as fighters want it more than the promoters. I'm dying to fight Tim Austin. You can't compare the guys he's fought to the guys I've fought. His opponents have all allowed him to do whatever he wants to do, but I'm going to dictate the fight, use ring generalship, fight like I always do, and beat him."

Ayala is also entertaining thoughts of big fights with the likes of WBC bantam titlist **Veerapol Sahaprom** (if the money is enough to make competing on the sometimes unlevel playing fields of Thailand worthwhile), 122-pound champ **Bones Adams**, comebacking **Mark Johnson**, and even a third fight with Tapia.

"But," Ayala said, "it would have to be on my terms this time."

STEVIE SHOOTS FOR SPADDY



Johnston: Wants "The Pittsburgh Kid"

In the days following his disappointing draw in his rematch with WBC lightweight champ **Jose Luis Castillo**, two-time former titlist **Stevie Johnston** suggested that his next step might be to retire. But after a few months passed, he modified that statement. The plan for Johnston, according to manager **Cameron Dunkin**, is to retire from chasing the WBC title, as he hasn't generally had the best luck with their judges, but to keep fighting in hopes of getting a shot at IBF champ **Paul Spadafora**. Johnston is already rated third by the New Jersey-based sanctioning body, and is in position to become fellow southpaw Spadafora's mandatory because the two spots above him are vacant.

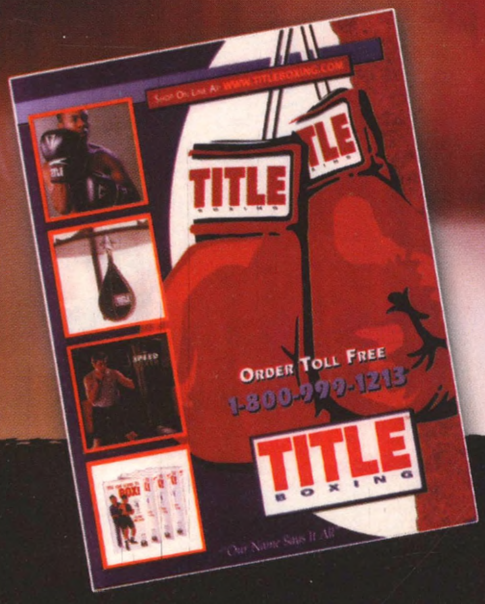
"If we get the number-one position, I'd love to take it to a purse bid and do it in Denver," Dunkin said. "Or if we're outbid by **Mike Acri** [Spadafora's promoter], I think it would be a great fight in Pittsburgh. Acri's done a great job moving Spadafora, but he's not in Stevie's league. Even 60 or 70 percent of Stevie still wins at least nine or 10 rounds against Spadafora."

But first things first. Johnston's comeback will likely begin with a tuneup on ESPN2, possibly in February.

LISTEN UP

Undefeated IBF cruiserweight champ **Vassiliy Jirov**, who hasn't made a title defense since February 2000 and recently bolted from Top Rank when his promotional contract ran out, has signed with the British-based Panix Promotions. The plan according to Panix chief **Panos Eliades** is to pursue unification bouts, starting ideally with **Johnny Nelson**, who holds the lesser WBO title ... Another big man who recently signed a new promotional deal is veteran heavyweight contender **Ray Mercer**, who has freed himself from **Don King** and is now being handled by America Presents. Mercer, who lost close decisions to both **Lennox Lewis** and **Evander Holyfield** in the mid-'90s, is aiming for a title shot against either one, though at age 38, he won't have a lot of time to re-establish himself as a viable contender ... Speaking of Holyfield, his rematch with **John Ruiz** is officially on for March 3 in Las Vegas ... According to Top Rank publicist **Lee Samuels**, we probably won't be seeing any more easy title defenses in Madison, Wisconsin, for WBA flyweight champ **Eric Morel** in the near future. The plan now for "Little Hands Of Steel" is to either head to Asia, where most of the contenders and most of the money in his weight class reside, or to move up in weight. Samuels said Morel can go as high as 122 pounds in pursuit of an attractive fight. ■

NO HEADACHES.
NO HASSLES.



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